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Ideas of History in the Epistle of Barnabas

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IDEAS OF HISTORY IN THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A satisfactory and comprehensive definition of "history" is difficult to find. The word is interpreted and used variously by historians. Eric Rust, for example, says that history may be defined as a "process of events, that is, the totality of past human actions" and as "the story of that process, a connected and intelligible narrative constructed by the historian from those events."[1] The German word Historie is often used to cover Rust's definition.

According to the Christian faith, however, history is not alone "the totality of past human actions." While history is something "natural" and may be viewed in terms of cause and effect, it is in addition "something willed and guided by God, that is, history with a goal."[2] The German word Geschichte is used with reference to this latter definition.

Montgomery broadens the distinction between the two definitions of history cited above by explaining that Historie refers to "facts capable of discovery by a neutral historical investigator" and Geschichte to "revelational events, which can never be identified with

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[1]Eric Rust, Towards A Theological Understanding of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 3.

[2]Sigmund Mowinckel, The Old Testament as Word of God, translated by Reidar B. Bjornard (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), p. 51.

Historie as such."[3] The one refers to facts and the other to the meaning and purpose of those facts. Though the two may be distinguished, both the facts and what they mean are properly called history.

In considering the epistle of Barnabas, this thesis will look for the interpretation of the meaning of historical facts rather than for the facts themselves, that is, it will analyze the epistle of Barnabas in terms of Barnabas' understanding of Geschichte. To consider the epistle in terms of Historie would produce at best meager results. Barnabas is no technical historian with an interest in facts. Something like Tacitus' formal presentation of Roman history from Tiberius to Domitian stands far afield from his purpose. Rather, Barnabas is interested in the meaning or inner side of the historical process. Coming within his view are "the past" and "things present or yet to come."[4] Barnabas, as will be demonstrated later, is concerned with cosmic history and, particularly, with the meaning of that history.

From what has been said thus far, it is apparent that one of the major assumptions of this thesis is: the epistle of Barnabas provides significant ideas about the writer's understanding of the historical process. An attempt to validate this will be made in what follows.

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[3]John W. Montgomery, "Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology of History," The Cresset, XXVII (November 1963), 10.

[4]The Epistle of Barnabas 17:1-2. Hereafter the epistle will be cited as Barn.

At this point, however, it may be necessary to note that the eminent scholar, Robert Grant, disagrees with this major assumption. Discussing Barnabas' exegetical method, Grant asserts that for Barnabas "history is really meaningless."[5] Suffice it to suggest here that Grant is partly correct in his reaction to the epistle. There are some instances in the epistle where Old Testament passages are typologized to such an extent that their value as records of past actuality in any sense is negated. Yet, in spite of Grant's criticism, a postulate of this thesis is that certain fixed ideas about God, creation, the economy of salvation, and eschatology begin to emerge when the entire epistle is considered as a unit. These are the topics which will be examined in the thesis. What Barnabas has to say about these topics should reveal his views on history.

A second major assumption, which will also be supported in the thesis, is: Barnabas' ideas about the historical process are determined largely by his convictions concerning the end times. An attempt will be made to demonstrate, in the first chapter particularly, how prominent the writer's interest in eschatology actually is. When this is substantiated, the previous assumption, that is, that the epistle provides significant ideas about the historical process, can be examined more confidently. Once the end of the historical process becomes evident or is known, then some meaning can be attached to the

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[5] Robert Grant, The Bible in the Church: A Short History of Interpretation (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), p. 46.

entire process. Löwith goes so far as to deny any significance to an event or a series of events unless the final outcome is known. He says:

> History . . . is meaningful only by indicating some transcedent purpose beyond the actual facts. But, since history is a movement in time, the purpose is a goal. Single events as such are not meaningful, nor is a mere succession of events. To venture a statement about the meaning of historical events is possible only when their telos becomes apparent.[6]

Barnabas calims special knowledge about the end of history. Therefore, he should be able to find meaning in the whole historical process.

Whether Barnabas' ideas about history are right or wrong is something the thesis will not attempt to decide. However, since the epistle was written within or shortly after the apostolic age[7] what Barnabas says can be profitably compared with the apostolic ideas. Such a comparison anticipates both continuity and discontinuity with the apostolic ideas.

As far as the apostolic view of history is concerned, the thesis will follow Cullman,[8] although realizing at the same time that his

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[6]Karl Löwith, Meaning in History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 5.

[7]Cf. Robert Grant, The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), p. 78, where a date of A.D. 131 to 132 is suggested.

[8]Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950). Cf. also The Early Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 143-144, where Cullmann maintains that in the Church eschatology is "an absolutely chronological concept" and opposes Bultmann who, he says, regards eschatology as an expression of "our permanent availability for existential decision."

views have been the object of some criticism. Nevertheless, on the basis of a careful analysis of the New Testament writings, Cullmann concluded that the apostles conceived the movement of history as linear rather than cyclical. This linear movement is limited by the creation at one end and the eschaton at the other. Intercepting this movement and standing at the very center of all history is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Cullmann summarizes his view as follows:

> God created the world as well as man. He has instituted man as lord over his whole creation, but the fall and its consequence, death, which has established its rule on earth, has made necessary a history of salvation which develops, according to the divine plan, by periods which are clearly determined by the two principles of election and substitution: the election of the people of Israel for the salvation of humanity, the election of a remnant of this people which is intended to represent the whole of Israel, the election of a unique "man," the suffering "Servant of God," who takes upon himself the sins of the world, the election of Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross and resurrection constitute the centre of the history of salvation. Henceforth the course of the story is inverted: it no longer proceeds from plurality to unity but from unity to the plurality of the saved. The Church is the body of this one and only Christ; it aspires to embrace the whole of humanity, and it will itself be followed by the final act of divine omnipotence, when God, as in the first creation, will decide in his sovereign act (κέλευσμα, I Thess. 4. 16) to constitute the new creation by means of the spirit of life. The Christian expectation of the end, the Christian hope for the future are part of the unfolding of this story, they are situated on the line which, starting from creation and passing through the people of Israel, the remnant, through Christ, the one, through the gospel and converted and ransomed humanity, opens out on the new creation. This line is a temporal line and it is characteristic of the Christian revelation.[9]

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[9]Cullmann, The Early Church, pp. 143-144.

The limits of the proposed study are obvious for the most part. One cannot pretend to have examined thoroughly all of the materials available on ideas of history in the apostolic and post-apostolic writings. The study, therefore, admits to a degree of selectivity in the use of source materials. The primary source is, of course, the epistle of Barnabas itself. The English translation and Greek text by Kirsopp Lake are used in the thesis. The New Testament, Eusebius' history, and the works of various church fathers also classify as primary sources. A wide selection of secondary sources relative to early Christian ideas on history have also been employed.

Finally, critical considerations of text, authorship, and date do not form a part of this study. Suffice it to say that the major editions of the epistle of Barnabas vary only at minor points. The majority of scholars presently agree that the author of the epistle cannot be identified with the companion of Paul on his first missionary tour. The author must remain anonymous for the moment, although it seems quite likely that he was an Alexandrian Jew. In addition, there seems to be some agreement among scholars that the epistle belongs to the reign of Hadrian and was possibly composed sometime between A.D. 117 and 132.

Before proceeding with the study certain presuppositions regarding the epistle ought to be clarified. The purpose of the thesis has been made explicit, that is, that the epistle of Barnabas is being examined in order to determine precisely what its ideas of history are. However, in order that there be no misunderstanding, it should be noted that the epistle is not considered representative of catholic thought or mainstream

theology in the Church of the early second century. Still one must reckon with the fact that the epistle was included as an appendix in the famous Codex Sinaiticus of the fourth century and that it was read aloud in the assemblies of the early Christians.[10] The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church includes Barnabas among those writings which "hovered for a time on the edge of the New Testament canon."[11] Beyond this, the relatively early date of the epistle adds to its value and establishes it as one of the "connecting links between the time of revelation and the time of tradition."[12] Whether Barnabas is a spokesman for the early Church does not, in the final analysis, determine the value or importance of the epistle. It must stand or fall on its own merits.

There are those who think lightly of the epistle. The fact that it is, in content, somewhat inferior to the New Testament writings has been noted by a number of scholars. The tone and manner of the New Testament are still present, some say, but the epistle ultimately descends to an altogether lower spiritual level.[13] Froom speaks of the entire

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[10]J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), p. 132.

[11]The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, F. L. Cross, editor (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 74.

[12]Johannes Quasten, Patrology (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950), I, 40.

[13]B. F. Westcott, A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament (London: The Macmillan Co., 1881), p. 20. Cf. also The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 74.

number of Apostolic Fathers as "lingering echoes, in distorted form, of those vital messages before them, written under inspiration."[14] At the same time, however, they sound forth the voices of an age soon to dawn upon the Church in history.[15]

Since the major assumption of the thesis is that the epistle of Barnabas is strongly eschatological in its ideas of history, what the epistle has to say about the eschaton will be considered first. Then a number of other topics will be examined and an attempt to determine the relation of each to the original chapter on eschatology will be made. The additional topics include: God and the world, the economy of salvation, and the meaning of the Old Testament. Of these additional topics, the first two are arranged so as to coincide with the first two articles of the Apostolic Creed. The chapter on the meaning of the Old Testament is reserved for the end of the thesis since it serves as a summary of Barnabas' ideas of history and as an explanation of how he arrived at these ideas.

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[14]LeRoy E. Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1950), I, 206. The term "Apostolic Fathers" is used throughout the thesis to refer to that body of literature which Robert Grant in The Apostolic Fathers, p. vi, describes as "writings from the early second century or last first century ascribed to Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Barnabas, and Hermas, together with the Didache, the fragments of Papias, and the Martyrdom of Polycarp."

[15]Cf. Westcott, p. 20.

CHAPTER II

THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

Before looking at the eschatological emphases in the epistle of Barnabas, some attempt should be made to put together what little information is available on the author and the particular situation out of which his epistle arose. Already indicated in the introduction is the fact that the author must remain anonymous for the moment. Whether his name was actually Barnabas is not known. Whoever he may have been, he at least used the name of Paul's companion in writing this epistle.

Also mentioned in the introduction is a possible date for the composition of the epistle. Actually, two dates are most frequently suggested for Barnabas: (1) A.D. 70-79, based upon the veiled reference to Vespasian in the fourth chapter, and (2) A.D. 130-132, based upon the reference to the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.[1] The latter date may refer to the insurrection of Bar-Cochba against the Romans in A.D. 132 when it appeared to the Jews that the revolt might succeed and enable them to rebuild the Temple.

Barnabas' epistle is quoted in the writings of two Alexandrian fathers, Clement and Origen.[2] These quotes, coupled with the fact that

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[1]Barn. 4:4; 16:3-4. Cf. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M. F. Marique and Gerald G. Walsh, The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Cima Publishing Company, Inc., 1947), p. 187.

[2]Robert M. Grant, The Apostolic Fathers (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), p. 78.

there are no traces of the epistle having been used outside of Alexandria in the second and third centuries, suggest Alexandria as a probable place of origin.[3] By Barnabas' time Christianity was fairly solidly entrenched in that city. According to Eusebium the Christian faith was carried to Alexandria by St. Mark before A.D. 61.[4]

Christianity did not remain unopposed in Alexandria. Before and during Barnabas' time a considerable number of Jews were living there. In addition, there were Greek philosophers and eastern mystics living side by side in this great metropolis. The Docetists and the followers of Cerinthus also found Alexandria fertile ground for their views. F. D. Vaughan adds that the early second century saw Gnostic teachers beginning to ventilate their strange theories of aeons in the city.[5] The Christian faith in Alexandria had to contend against these kinds of heresies.

While there may be some slight allusions to Docetism and Gnosticism in the epistle of Barnabas, it was not to these heresies that the author directed his attention. As a Jewish convert to Christianity and as a layman of the Alexandrian church,[6] Barnabas focused his attention upon

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[3] Ibid., p. 79.

[4] Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History ii. 16; iii. I, v. 10. Hereafter Eusebius is cited as H. E. Cf. F. D. Vaughan, Five Centuries of Catholic Witness (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1934), p. xxvi.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Cf. Barn. 4:6, "as being one of yourselves."

Judaism and warned his readers against its teachings. In particular, Barnabas warned his readers against a Jewish literalistic interpretation of the Old Testament. His reasons for doing so do not seem to stem from any particular difficulty with the Jews. Perhaps Harnack is correct in suggesting that Barnabas and others were unable to explain in a rational and historical way how the promise originally made to the Jews could not be transferred to another people. The only means at their disposal for bridging the gap was the spiritualization of the entire Old Testament.[7] To bridge the gap was Barnabas' real concern and led him to focus upon the Jews' literal interpretation of the Old Testament.

Barnabas spiritualized the Old Testament by means of the allegorical method. This particular method, which will be discussed more fully in the last chapter, was not without precedence in Alexandria. The Jewish philosopher, Philo, had popularized it there about a century before Barnabas' time. Glimm, however, claims Barnabas' discovery of hidden meanings even under the single letters of a word discloses that he was not a true allegorist, but rabbinical or cabbalistic in his methodology.[8] The latter may, along with Barnabas' obvious familiarity with the Old Testament, suggest that he was once a rabbi or a rabbinical student. At any rate, he was a convert from Judaism who was determined to set his Christian brethren straight on the matter of Old Testament interpretation.

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[7]Adolph Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), pp. 44-72.

[8]Glimm, p. 188.

The eschatology of the epistle of Barnabas, which is the primary concern of this chapter, should be considered against the background presented above. The following topics will point up his major eschatological emphases: (1) the return of Christ or the Parousia; (2) the resurrection of the dead; (3) the judgment; (4) the catastrophic ending of the present world-order.[9] To these shall be added several paragraphs on Barnabas' view of baptism and his use of the term "kingdom." An attempt will be made to show that each of these topics undergirds the futuristic thrust in Barnabas' thinking.

As far as the Parousia is concerned Barnabas is at one with the rest of the Apostolic Fathers. Neve correctly characterizes these Fathers as "thoroughly eschatological in tendency" because they anticipated the immediate return of Christ.[10] Thus Hermas speaks of the Tower nearing completion and says that when it is finished the end will come.[11] Barnabas in a number of instances, refers to his times as "the last days" (ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις), that is, the days immediately preceding the coming of Christ.[12] Other fathers shared this view. Ignatius, in his letter to the Ephesians, states unequivocally:

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[9]J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 462.

[10]J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), I, 43.

[11]The Shepherd of Hermas, Vision III, 8:9.

[12]Barn. 4:9; 6:13; cf. also 4:3; 12:9; 16:5; 21:3.

"These are the last times" (Ἔσχατοι καιροί).[13] Likewise the concluding section of the Didache speaks about "the last days," encouraging its readers to be watchful as the end fast approaches.[14]

Barnabas' point of view is that the scandal of the last days is already present and the critical time is drawing near.[15] "The day is at hand when all things shall perish with the Evil one," he says.[16] The Lord is coming speedily having "cut short the times and the days."[17] Before the Parousia dawns, however, "the wicked one" must have his day.[18]

When Christ comes he will be seen and acknowledged by the Jews who rejected him: "then 'they will see him' on that day with the long scarlet robe 'down to the feet' on his body, and they will say, 'Is not this he whom we once crucified and rejected and pierced and spat upon?'"[19] The cosmic and the judicial functions of Christ on that day are also described.[20]

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[13]Ignatius to the Ephesians 11:1.

[14]Didache 16:2.

[15]Cf. Kelly, p. 463. Cf. also Cecil J. Cadoux, The Early Church and the World (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1925), p. 154.

[16]Barn. 21:3.

[17]Barn. 4:3.

[18]Barn. 15:5.

[19]Barn. 7:9.

[20]Barn. 15:5.

When the Apostolic Fathers are studied carefully, one becomes aware of an acute problem raised by the fact that the Parousia was delayed. While Barnabas does not speak of the problem he seems to have been cognizant of it. The early Christians in general believed in the imminent triumph of Christianity, although they were divided as to the exact form this triumph would take.[21] When Christ did not return in triumph as they expected, they began to wonder whether they had been made victims of deceit. This, for example, is probably at the basis of the words in I Clement: "we have heard these things even in the days of our fathers, and behold we have grown old, and none of these things has happened to us."[22] In response Clement quotes from the Old Testament prophets to reassure his readers that God's will "shall be quickly and suddenly accomplished."[23] A number of passages in the Shepherd of Hermas speak to this same problem. In the third vision, for example, the Church appears as a weak old woman seated in a chair.[24] Werner feels that this is a picture of contemporary Christianity which "had grown old, was near to perishing, and was powerless through

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[21]Cadoux, p. 222.

[22]I Clement 23:3; cf. also II Clement 11:2.

[23]I Clement 23:5; cf. Isaiah 13:22; Malachi 3:1.

[24]Hermas, Vision III, 1:7-9.

'delicate living and doubt.'"[25] The ninth similitude of Hermas repeats the main features of the third vision adding that the building of the Tower has been suspended for a time.[26] Bigg interprets this reference to imply that "the end of the world is no longer regarded as immediately impending."[27]

Disillusionment and perhaps even despair among the early Christians came to the surface because of the long delay of the Lord's return. While the majority of Christians continued to hold to the traditional view, that is, that the Lord would return soon, the old hopes were beginning to loose their original freshness and vigor.[28]

Faced with the delay of the Parousia, the early Christians were thrown back upon themselves and forced to rethink the matter of eschatology. A relatively early attempt to resolve the problem is recorded in the well-known passage of II Peter where it is said that

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[25]Martin Werner, The Formation of Christian Dogma (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1957), p. 45. While Werner's view may be partly correct, it seems to be contradicted by a later explanation of the vision where the Church is said to be "old" because of its pre-existence. Cf. Hermas, Vision III, 3:3. In another vision, the old lady has become young.

[26]Hermas, Similitudes IX, 5:2. The dating of the various portions of Hermas is problematic. Grant, The Apostolic Fathers, p. 85, refers to Stanislaus Giet's study (Hermas et les Pasteurs, Paris, 1963), where the author contends for three different contributors to our Hermas. According to this view the ninth similitude would have been composed well after Barnabas' time. Grant, however, argues that only one author wrote Hermas, and did so not much later than A.D. 140.

[27]Charles Bigg, The Origins of Christianity (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 73.

[28]Cadoux, p. 223.

a thousand years are like a day in God's sight and that the delay of the Parousia is God's gracious provision of a time for repentance.[29] Another attempt to resolve the problem was made by pseudo-Clement who employed a prophetical analogy from tree-life in order to confirm the faithfulness of God in the matter of the Parousia.[30]

Barnabas does not provide a clear-cut resolution for the problem of the delay in Christ's coming. As a matter of fact, he seems to compound the problem. On the one hand he maintains that he and his readers are living in the last times and that the end is near.[31] On the other hand, as will be discussed in more detail later, Barnabas develops a scheme whereby he pushes the return of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God well into the future.[32] Kelly probably has Barnabas in mind when he describes early Christianity as giving up the assurance of living in the Messianic age for the "conception of God's kingdom as a region or state, located exclusively in the future."[33] At any rate, it is interesting that the conflict between

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[29]II Peter 3:8ff. Cf. Frank Balchim, "The Early Church in the Pagan World," The South East Asia Journal of Theology, I (April 1960), 33. Balchim says that when the Parousia did not materialize as expected, "the 'second advent' became divided off and the consequent situation compelled the Church to rethink the eschatological problem."

[30]II Clement 11:2-7.

[31]Barn. 4:9. Cf. L. W. Barnard, "The Epistle of Barnabas and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Some Observations," Scottish Journal of Theology, XIII (1960), 45-59.

[32]Barn. 15:4.

[33]Kelly, p. 460.

living in the last times and the time of Christ's return is permitted to stand. Barnabas makes no attempt to explain or resolve this conflict.

For Barnabas, the Parousia means the ushering in of God's kingdom. What he has to say about the kingdom enables him to take his place along side of Papias as one of the first Christian writers to advocate chiliasm.[34] He was followed in this by Justin, Irenaeus, Lactantius, and Augustine (in his earlier years).[35] All agreed that before the general judgment and the general resurrection Christ would return to establish an earthly kingdom and would reign for a thousand years with the just.[36] In developing this thesis the Fathers, and especially Barnabas, relied on Jewish apocalyptic literature.[37]

In explaining the presence of chiliastic views in the early Church, Harnack states that a considerable amount of free theological thinking and conceptualization was permitted.[38] He says that possession of the Holy Spirit was judged the primary criterion for truth in the early Church. It is significant, then that Barnabas claims possession of the

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[34]Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, editors, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1948), p. 179.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid. "The Jews indulged similar ideas in interpreting certain Messianic texts (as Joel 3:17; Isa. 6:11; 66:18. Cf. also Rev. 20:4)."

[38]Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910), I, 166.

Holy Spirit and, in fact, ascribes his gnosis to divine inspiration.[39] This possession of the Spirit provided him with the freedom he needed to develop his chiliastic points of view. Harnack suggests that this freedom in the Spirit was responsible for the fact that "productions of fancy, the terrible or consoling pictures of the future pass for sacred knowledge, just as much as intelligent and sober reflections, and edifying interpretation of Old Testament sayings."[40]

The chiliasts, like Papias and Barnabas, spoke of a future earthly reign of Christ. Papias gave a rather immoderate and materialistic cast to his views on the millenium. He spoke of the new age when the righteous will be raised from the dead and a marvelous transformation in the fertility of the earth will occur. Grapes on the vine will then be abundant, grain will be fruitful, and ferocious animals will become strangely docile in the millennium.[41] Irenaeus, at a later date, quotes these crude materialistic views of Papias with apparent favor.[42] To Eusebius, however, and to the school with which he was associated these views were extremely repugnant. In disgust he refers to Papias as a man "very limited in his comprehension."[43]

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[39]Barn. 1:5.

[40]Harnack, History of Dogma, p. 166.

[41]J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), p. 269.

[42]Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V. 33:3f.

[43]H.E. XXXIX.

Barnabas' views on the millennium are not quite so bold as those of his near contemporary. Matters like the abundance of grain and the docility of the animals do not seem to interest him. Barnabas is more interested in the time when the millennium will begin. His distinctive contribution to millennialism, therefore, is the development of a chronological scheme for the last times.

Barnabas divides history into seven millennia on the basis of the creation account in Genesis.[44] On the seventh day, he says, the Lord rested from all He had made. This Sabbath rest is linked prophetically to the final consummation. God created the world in six days and will bring it to an end in six thousand years. For, according to Psalm 90, with the Lord one day is as a thousand years.

The fact that God rested on the seventh day means that when Christ comes he will destroy the age (καιρός) of the wicked or lawless one (ἄνομος), judge the impious, and transform the sun, moon, and stars. This catastrophic interruption will inaugurate the seventh day or the thousand years of rest.

Barnabas does not bother to describe the nature of the millennial rest. Elsewhere in the epistle he quotes from the Psalter about the promise of Christ's enemies becoming a footstool for him and also cites

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[44]Barn. 15:3-9. Cf. Quasten and Plumpe, p. 179 where the following diagram is offered as illustrative of Barnabas' theory of days or periods:

Days: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 the present/7 Mill./8 eternity

the past

Isaiah's prophecy concerning the obedience of the Gentiles to Christ.[45] On the ground of the first chapter in Genesis where the promise of dominion over the animals is given to man he assures his readers that they "shall live and possess the earth."[46]

Barnabas was not the first nor the last to attempt a chronology for the end of the world. Hippolytus believed that the world had approximately two hundred and fifty years to run since the incarnation fell into the middle of the sixth period. Therefore, he said, the Parousia would occur around A.D. 500.[47] Lactantius varied from Hippolytus' calculations by about fifty years.[48] Based upon the expected duration of the Roman Empire, the Sibylline Oracles predicted the end in A.D. 195.[49] Augustine, who once held millennialistic views, ultimately broke with them and projected the Parousia indefinitely into the future.[50] Gregory of Nyssa rejected Barnabas' scheme and said that the seven thousand years embraced the totality of time without a break for a millennium.[51]

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[45]Barn. 12:10; cf. Ps. 110:1; Isa. 45:1.

[46]Barn. 6:17-19; cf. Gen. 1:26, 28.

[47]Roland H. Bainton, Early and Medieval Christianity (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 6.

[48]James Hastings, editor, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1908), p. 388.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Bainton, p. 7.

[51]Ibid.

From the above paragraph it can be seen that chronological schemes leading to the end of the world were not unusual. Barnabas was therefore no innovator in one sense. His contribution was a rather unique method of determining a chronological scheme, a method which was possibly employed to postpone rather than to bring near the end of time.[52]

An additional feature of Barnabas' millennial scheme ought to be noted here. At the end of the celebrated fifteenth chapter he speaks of "the beginning of an eighth day, that is, the beginning of another world."[53] The beginning of this new world which followed immediately upon the universal Sabbath was prefigured in the "eighth day in which Jesus also arose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into Heaven."[54] Cryptically, the eighth day is also the first day, or the beginning of eternity.

According to Bietenhard, Barnabas' ideas on the millenium betray the influence of the rabinnic schools.[55] A certain amount of evidence can be collected to support the notion that

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[52]Grant, The Apostolic Father, p. 114. Grant says that Barnabas' readers should have seen through his scheme. According to Jewish chronology the world was approximately 5,500 years old at the time. Using Barnabas' scheme, the end was therefore not very close.

[53]Barn. 15:8.

[54]Barn. 15:9.

[55]Hans Bietenhard, "The Millenial Hope in the Early Church," Journal of Scottish Theology, I (March 1953), 13.

Barnabas was at one time a Jewish rabbi.[56] It is quite possible, too, that the references to the "eighth day" are not original with Barnabas but derive from his associations with the cathechetical, homiletical, and exegetical traditions of the synagogue.[57] If it is true that the millennialism or chiliasm of Barnabas is derived from Judaism and, in particular, from the rabbinical schools, then Harnack's judgment that the "so-called Chiliasm . . . is found wherever the Gospel is not yet Hellenised" may be correct.[58] At any rate, from the time of Barnabas on chiliasm always appears within his framework of a universal week of seven thousand years.[59]

The ideas of the Parousia and the millennium appear in close connection with the resurrection of the body in the epistle of Barnabas. Elliott-Binns comments: "if men were to take their place in such a scheme (the millennium) they would obviously require bodies."[60] The resurrection of the body is therefore decidedly emphasized in the epistle of Barnabas. The remaining Apostolic Fathers, too, are interested

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[56] L. W. Barnard, "The Epistle of Barnabas and the Tannaitic Catechism," Anglican Theological Review, XLI (July 1959), 177-190. Barnard cites evidence from the epistle of Barnabas and argues convincingly that the author was once a Jewish rabbi.

[57] Ibid. Cf. also Enoch 33:1-2.

[58] Harnack, History of Dogma, p. 167.

[59] Bietenhard, p. 13.

[60] L. E. Elliott-Binns, The Beginnings of Western Christendom (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), p. 307.

in the resurrection. Their argument in favor of it is as follows: if men are able to win rewards or punishment while in the flesh, they ought also to enjoy their rewards and endure their punishment in the same flesh. Thus, there must be a resurrection.[61]

This concern with the resurrection was not a petty concern. Already there had arisen a Hellenistic tendency to rationalize and spiritualize currently accepted Christian ideas on the resurrection.[62] During Paul's time there were some members of the Corinthian congregation who denied the resurrection while others at Ephesus maintained that it had already occurred.[63] A passage from Polycarp's letter to the Philippians shows that the tendency to explain away or deny the resurrection reached into the early part of the second century. Polycarp wrote: "Whoever perverts the oracles of the Lord for his own lusts, and says that there is neither resurrection nor judgment,--this man is the first-born of Satan."[64] These denials of the resurrection could possibly be related to the spiritual and anti-material tendencies fostered by Docetism and Gnosticism. Whatever the case, Barnabas and the other Apostolic Fathers placed a great amount of stress on the literal meaning of the resurrection

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[61]Arthur C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), I, 90. Cf. II Clement 9:1-4.

[62]Cadoux, p. 153.

[63]I. Cor. 15:2, II Tim. 2:18.

[64]Polycarp to the Philippians 7:1.

of the body.[65]

While the Apostolic Fathers agree on the fact of the resurrection, opinions vary as to whether this is a resurrection of all or only of the just. The Didache especially seems to restrict the resurrection to the just only.[66] Barnabas is indefinite on the matter, unless his rather free quote from Psalm 1 implies exclusion of the wicked in the resurrection.[67] He says that Christ arose to abolish death (ἵνα καταργήσῃ θάνατον) and to provide assurance of our resurrection (καὶ τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀνάστασιν δεῖξῃ).[68] Hence the Christian's glad celebration of the eighth day.[69] Christ is the agent of the resurrection and the judge of those who are raised. Those who do the divine will, will be raised and glorified in the same flesh as they now have.[70]

According to the Apostolic Fathers the resurrection of the flesh will be accompanied by the judgment. The development of a fixed formula

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[65]Kelly, p. 163. Cf. also Edward W. Winstanley, "The Outlook of the Apostolic Fathers," The Expositor, XVIII (1919), 283-306.

[66]Didache 16:6.

[67]"The wicked shall not rise up in judgment," Barn. 11:7; Ps. 1:5. Cadoux, p. 156, seems to think that Barnabas does not allow for a resurrection of the wicked.

[68]Barn. 5:6-7.

[69]Barn. 15:9.

[70]Barn. 21:1. Cf. also II Clement 9:1-4.

is already apparent here.[71] In other incidentals concerning the judgment, the Apostolic Fathers present a variety of notions. Clement of Rome faintly hints that a judgment takes place not only at the Parousia but immediately after death, too.[72] The elders at Smyrna were certain that the martyred Polycarp had already received the "crown of immortality."[73] Ignatius contributes the thought that the judgment will extend to angels and heavenly rulers as well as to men.[74] Common to all, however, is the fact that the judgment is universal and in the future.[75]

Barnabas connects the judgment with the Parousia and the resurrection.[76] He, in addition, reflects the consensus of the Apostolic Fathers when he constructs a highly moralistic framework around the judgment. He states: "Each will receive according to his deeds. If he be good his righteousness will lead him, if he be evil the reward of iniquity is before him."[77] What the recompense for evil might be

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[71]"Judge of the living and the dead," Barn. 7:2. Cf. also II Clement 1:1 and Polycarp to the Philippians 2:1.

[72]I Clement 5:4-7; 6:1; 50:3.

[73]Martyrdom of Polycarp 17:1.

[74]Ignatius to the Smyrneans 6:1.

[75]Barn. 4:12; I Clement 28:1; II Clement 17:4-7; Hermas, Similitude III, 4:1-3; Polycarp to the Philippians 7:1.

[76]Barn. 5:7.

[77]Barn. 4:12.

Barnabas does not bother to explain in detail. Those who do iniquity will be at least thrust out from the kingdom of the Lord and made to Perish (ἀπόλλυμι) with their works. Connecting this with Barnabas' ideas on the resurrection may suggest that he does not imply the total annihilation of the wicked. That they will be outside the joys of the millennium is as far as he is willing to go, although the other Apostolic Fathers go further.[78]

The closing part of the epistle of Barnabas utilizes the Jewish manual of the "Two Ways."[79] The readers are urged to "remember the day of judgment day and night" so that when the day arrives they might find their place among the faithful.[80] An aura of fear surrounds the idea of judgment and is used to incite the Christians to missionary work and common labor as a means of self-atonement.[81]

Barnabas' use of the judgment theme as an incentive to morality seemed to be necessary for his times. The post-apostolic period saw the Church coming into closer association with the hostile pagan world. In the process the Church recognized the danger of secularization and

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[78]Cf. the reference to "fiery torture" for apostates in the Martyrdom of Polycarp 11:2; II Clement 5:4; 17:4-7; Ignatius to the Ephesians 16:2.

[79]Barn. 18-20. Cf. Barnard, "The Epistle of Barnabas and the Tammaitic Catechism," and James Muilenberg, The Literary Relations of the Epistle of Barnabas and the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Marburg, Germany, 1929).

[80]Barn. 19:10; 21:6.

[81]Cf. Barn. 19:10, "striving to save souls by the word, or working with thine hands for the ransom of thy sins."

the possibility of losing her moral purity. She felt compelled to put a "keener edge on her eschatological weapon."[82] Hence the use of the judgment theme as a warning. The use of the judgment in this sense was even more compelling in view of Hermas' conviction that the time of repentance was strictly limited. Only one more chance for repentance after baptism is possible, according to Hermas, and God is already postponing the day of judgment so that men might have time to repent.[83] Whether Barnabas held this same view we do not know. In any case, he may have agreed in principle with Clement of Rome that the stories of the Old Testament patriarchs, for example, ought to be sufficient to assure man of divine judgment and arouse him to seek shelter under the mercy of God before it is too late.[84]

At the Parousia the present world order will be destroyed in catastrophic fashion. Hermas is quite definite on this point. In explaining the "four colors" he states that "the colour of fire and blood means that this world must be destroyed by blood and fire."[85] The present order will give way to a new order of things suitable for the life of God's elect.[86] Pseudo-Clement adds the notion that at the

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[82]Cadoux, p. 225. Cf. Martyrdom of Polycarp 11:2.

[83]Hermas, Vision II, 2:5.

[84]I Clement 28:1; cf. also 11:2; 17:5.

[85]Hermas, Vision IV, 3:3.

[86]Hermas, Vision I, 3:4.

judgment "the whole earth shall be as lead melting in the fire."[87]

Barnabas is not so explicit concerning the end of the world. Only two references in the epistle address themselves to the question of how the world will come to an end.[88] The one speaks about the destruction (καταργέω) of the present time (καιρός), the time of the wicked one, and about the change (ἀλλάσσω) that will occur in the heavenly bodies. The other says that all things shall be destroyed (ἀπόλλυμι) with the evil one. Bauer translates καταργέω "put an end" to the time of the lawless one.[89] The rest of the passage is then translated as follows: "he will change (ἀλλάσσω) the sun, moon, and the stars, so that they lose their radiance.[90] Ἀπόλλυμι is a stronger word than καταργέω and implies the destruction and ruin of evil, not merely its end.[91]

It seems, then, that Barnabas does not anticipate some catastrophic interruption in the present order of things. Assuming that he is consistent with his view on the millennium he may mean that the world will not actually be destroyed but catastrophically purged of all evil in order to become the world of the elect only. Another possibility,

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[87] II Clement 16:3.

[88] Barn. 15:5; 21:3.

[89] Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 418.

[90] Ibid., p. 38.

[91] Ibid., p. 94.

however, is that he expects the world literally to come to an end and a new world to be created by God. Either possibility can be derived from the inconclusive comments of the epistle. There is a rather puzzling passage in the sixth chapter which refers to the second creation (πλάσις).[92] But creation ex nihilo or an entirely new creation, the old having been totally destroyed, cannot be read into it.

Two references to the sacrament of baptism carry forward the futuristic element in Barnabas' eschatology.[93] Both of these passages emphasize principally the forgiveness of sins. Man goes "down into the water full of sins and foulness." Sins are washed away in baptism so that the same man can come out of the water "bearing the fruit of fear" and "having hope on Jesus." Such a one is carried, through baptism, into the eschatological future because he knows, as a forgiven sinner, that he "shall live forever." Before the remission of sins or baptism man's heart is a "house of demons." Through divine forgiveness in baptism he becomes new, "being created again from the beginning." The latter probably should be compared with Barnabas' words elsewhere about "a second creation" in the last days.[94] It seems that at this point Barnabas sees the future and the present coinciding. By the forgiveness of sins and the incorporation into Christ through baptism

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[92]Barn. 6:13.

[93]Barn. 11:11; 16:7-10.

[94]Barn. 6:13.

one is permitted, as a new creature, to share already in the future life.

Our survey of Barnabas' eschatology would be incomplete if something were not said about his use of the term βασιλεία. The word appears in various forms ten times in the epistle. Cullmann translates the word "dominion" and says that it included three meanings: (1) the exercise of power, government (2) the sphere, the territory or area governed (3) the community of those who are governed.[95] All three meanings are involved in Barnabas' use of βασιλεία with the latter two meanings especially evident because of his concern with a material future existence.

In the discussion of the millennium it was noted how the appearing of Christ as the Parousia passes over into the idea of the kingdom. Christ's appearing and the kingdom were the chief objects of hope among the early Christians and, after the cross, the most impelling motives in their witness.[96] The idea of the kingdom was usually propagandized in a material form. Later the idea may have been spiritualized; but for the moment it prevailed as a materialistic view signifying the reign of the saints in the flesh.[97]

At one point, Barnabas' words suggest the possibility that this kingdom is a present reality. In the section which compares the

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[95]Oscar Cullmann, The Early Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 120.

[96]LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1950), I, p. 216.

[97]Hastings, p. 388.

sacrifice of Christ with the Old Testament sacrifice of the heifer, Barnabas says: "the kingdom of Jesus is on the wood" (ἐπὶ ξύλου).[98] Lake permits "on the tree" as a possible translation. Lightfoot makes the sense clear when he translates: "the kingdom of Jesus is on the cross." If Christ rules from the cross then his kingdom is already present.

For the main part, however, the drift of Barnabas' thought is always toward the future and the eschatological kingdom. In his final exhortation he asks his readers to walk in the ordinances of the Lord. An eschatological incentive is given in the following words: "For he who does these things shall be glorified in the kingdom of God."[99] The passage once again suggests that the kingdom will be realized in the future.[100]

From the above it seems that Barnabas' idea of the kingdom is anchored almost exclusively in the future. However, he also faintly hints that the kingdom might be a present reality. This is not to imply that Barnabas' ideas on the kingdom present a clear reproduction of what has been called the New Testament tension between the "now" and the "not yet." That Barnabas considers the kingdom to be a present reality rests on one inconclusive piece of evidence. In general his idea of the kingdom is an almost radical futurist idea.

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[98] Barn. 8:5.

[99] Barn. 21:1.

[100] Cf. Barn. 4:13; 7:11.

Perhaps Cullmann's differentiation between the Regnum Christi, the Church, and the kingdom of God, will help explain Barnabas' idea of the kingdom. Cullmann says that the Regnum Christi and the Church of Christ are present realities whose beginning is behind and whose end is before us. The kingdom of God, on the other hand, is "a purely future quantity."[101] Barnabas' statement that "the kingdom of Jesus is on the cross" may be taken as a reference to the Regnum Christi, a present reality. The kingdom of God, however, remains basically a future quantity.[102]

A number of references to βασιλεία in Barnabas' epistle lead into a different aspect of the kingdom from the preceding--an aspect in which Jewish apocalyptic influence may be detected. In chapter four of the epistle a combination of passages from Enoch and Daniel are employed to demonstrate the progression of secular history.[103] Barnabas begs his readers to avoid lawlessness and to hate "the error of the present time."[104] He then suggests that the "final stumbling block is at hand," a phrase which may be rendered, "the Archseducer is

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[101]Cullmann, p. 109.

[102]Cf. Barn. 21:1, the only passage in which the phrase is used. It is significant that this single reference speaks of the kingdom of God as something located in the future.

[103]Barn. 4:1-5; cf. also Enoch 89:61-64; 90:17; Dan. 7:7,8,24.

[104]Cf. Hans Windisch, Der Barnabasbrief (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1920), p. 318. Windisch says: "ἀνομία = πλάνη τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ = Nomismus." This is the concrete danger (Gefahr) of Judaism, according to Barnabas.

near."[105]

All of this is prelude to what Barnabas really wants to say. Picking his way through apocalyptic literature he settles on Daniel's reference to the ten kingdoms and the little king. Apparently he feels that Daniel has here provided a cryptogram of the final stages of world history. Many attempts have been made by scholars to decipher this mysterious passage, none of them too successfully. Seeberg's interpretation was popular for a number of years. He tried to identify the ten kingdoms with the Roman emperors from Augustus to Domitian.[106] There are almost insurmountable difficulties in working out the list of the ten kingdoms. It is probably wiser to agree with Barnard who claims that this passage "is no clearer than the 'historical allusions' of the Dead Sea Scrolls."[107]

In any case this apocalyptic statement is instructive concerning Barnabas' use of βασιλεία. He does not limit βασιλεία to sacred history alone, but applies it also to profane history. At the same time he shows himself aware of and interested in the history of the Imperium Romanum, or world history. Lietzmann says that the early Christians "entered into the heritage of Jewish eschatology, and from

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[105]Cf. Quasten and Plumpe, p. 170.

[106]Reinhold Seeberg, Text-Book of the History of Doctrines (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1954), I, 73.

[107]L. W. Barnard, "The Problem of the Epistle of Barnabas," The Church Quarterly Review, CLIX (1958), 212-213.

apocalypticism learned to regard the history of the world as the way of approach to the kingdom of God."[108] This seems to be the purpose behind Barnabas' citation of the Daniel apocalypse. He wants to show that the kings and the kingdoms of this world will rise and fall, ultimately giving way to the eschatological kingdom. For Christ and his kingdom constitute the goal and the final meaning of history.[109]

Granting the fact that Barnabas may be somewhat less than profound in his exposition of Christianity, it nevertheless seems that on occasion he comes close to making a significant contribution to the development of orthodox Christian thought. On the matter of the βασιλεία he seems to be saying that "history moves forward toward its consummation, a consummation which is in the hands of God who created history and rules it." The βασιλεία is thus "in some sense a continuation of history, even though it be a new heaven and a new earth."[110] Whether Barnabas would go beyond this point is difficult to ascertain.

Shinn adds a few words on the meaning of history which may help to bring the foregoing discussion into better perspective. He says that an eschatological faith views history as always more than just the obvious. Yet meaning in history is not found by transcending

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[108]Hans Lietzmann, A History of the Early Church (New York: World Publishing Company, 1961), II, 50-51.

[109]Ibid.

[110]Roger L. Shinn, Christianity and the Problem of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 34.

individual events in order to discover universals, "but by living out the historical process to its End."[111] With this latter statement Barnabas would probably disagree. For Barnabas a knowledge of the eschaton provides insight into the divine purpose that transcends the actual facts of history. The eschaton is that which can give meaning to all of history. The Lord has seen fit to give "knowledge of the past, and wisdom for the present, and that we are not without understanding for the future."[112] A compass gives one orientation in space and enables him to conquer it. Similarly "the eschatological compass gives orientation in time by pointing to the Kingdom of God as the ultimate end and purpose."[113]

On the basis of relevant passages in the epistle of Barnabas[114] Shirley Jackson Case supplies the following summary of what has been discussed in this chapter:

> He exhorts his readers to shun the works of lawlessness, loathing the error of the present time, in order that they may be favored in time to come. The season of final distress is already drawing to a close, the time having been shortened in order that the victorious Christ might more quickly enter into his inheritance. The imminent day of judgment will bring an end to all evil. Those who crucified Jesus will behold him descending from heaven attired in regal splendor to punish the wicked and to receive into his kingdom all who have suffered affliction in consequence of their loyalty to

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Barn. 1:7.

[113] Karl Löwith, Meaning in History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 18.

[114] Barn. 4:1-3; 7:9-11; 6:11-19; 15:1-9; 21:3.

> him. As a preliminary stage in the process by which the creation is finally to be restored to its original perfection, through the remission of their sins Christians have already become a new type, a re-created humanity. The full consummation of this process is presently to be realized when believers are to be made perfect. The end is to be attained six thousand years after the creation, each day of creation week representing one thousand years in the duration of the world. Then God will send His Son to abolish the reign of the lawless ones, to judge the ungodly, to change sun, moon, and stars, and to introduce a rest day of one thousand years answering to the Sabbath following the work of creation. At the close of this millennium a still greater transformation will be accomplished, inaugurating an eighth day which is the beginning of another world at present typified by the Christian Sunday.[115]

Before concluding this chapter it might be advisable to raise a number of questions on the basis of Barnabas' eschatology. Why is eschatology such an important issue in the epistle of Barnabas? A number of scholars hold that there is more discontinuity than continuity with the New Testament in Barnabas' eschatology. Is their opinion correct, or have we in Barnabas a fairly consistent reproduction of New Testament eschatology? On the basis of Barnabas' eschatology can it be said that the epistle has a philosophy of history? If so, what are some implications of its philosophy in terms of the historical process?

There are a number of possibilities which might explain the prominent role that eschatology plays in Barnabas' thinking. Cairns, himself a millennialist, suggests that interest in eschatology is in

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[115] Shirley Jackson Case, The Millennial Hope (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918), pp. 157-158.

direct ratio to the internal and external conditions faced by the Church in the course of her history. When prosperous and peaceful conditions prevail inside and outside the Church little interest in eschatology is evinced. However, Cairns adds, when "the Church is challenged by a hostile social and political order or by catastrophe in history, it examines the Scriptures for clues to the meaning and end of history."[116] A quick glance at the history of the Church "reveals that until A.D. 325 the Church, faced with an unfriendly Judaism and with a hostile Roman state, studied eschatology for comfort and hope."[117]

The epistle of Barnabas comes out of this period during which the Church was fraught with internal and external difficulties. This perhaps explains the frequent references to the "woes" of the latter days which the author and his readers were said to be experiencing.[118] In addition, the sixteenth chapter speaks about the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the contemplation of its reconstruction.[119] The latter occurred during the reign of Hadrian, although not as the Jews expected. Rumor had it that Hadrian would rebuild the Jewish Temple, while what actually happened in A.D. 32 was the erection of

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[116]Earle E. Cairns, "Eschatology and Church History," Bibliotheca Sacra, CXV (April 1958), 137.

[117]Ibid.

[118]Barn., passim.

[119]Barn. 16:3-4.

the temple of Capitoline Jupiter on the ancient holy site in Jerusalem.[120] Barnabas seems to have believed the rumor, for he was moved in his anti-semitic way to call Hadrian's promise "the final stumbling block."[121] The community addressed in his letter consisted of Christians who were on the verge of relapse into Judaism. Hadrian's promise had apparently supplied further motivation for these Jewish Christians to forsake the New Israel for the Old.

Hadrian's erection of a pagan temple in A.D. 123 shattered Jewish hopes and precipitated the last great insurrection of the News under Barkochba.[122] In the process of putting down the revolt a sharp and clear distinction between Jews and Christians was not followed by the Romans. The Christians, even those dwelling in Egypt, were subjected to Roman attack. It is difficult to say just how matters went on the basis of the epistle of Barnabas. His recourse to Daniel's prophecy indicates that some difficulty had been encountered by the Church and that it needed reassurance and comfort.[123]

Cairns' view is thus correct as far as the epistle of Barnabas is concerned. The latter's attentiveness to eschatology and his use of apocalyptic was probably caused by the internal and external

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[120] Lietzmann, p. 220.

[121] Barn. 4:3.

[122] Lietzmann, p. 220.

[123] Dan. 7:7,8,24.

struggles of the Church in the early part of the second century.

Another possible explanation for Barnabas' interest in eschatology has been proposed by Cullmann. Cullmann claims that the Apostolic Fathers robbed the death and resurrection of Christ of their central place in the structure of the Christian faith. They did this, he says, because they were guilty of misunderstanding the New Testament witness. Also, he says, these Fathers no longer considered the present to be the final period of this age. The Apostolic Fathers "abandoned the Pauline concept of grace anchored in the cross and resurrection, as well as almost the entire hope of the New Testament." The latter were replaced by Jewish apocalyptic speculations.[124]

Cullmann's idea seems to apply to the epistle of Barnabas. Barnabas is more concerned with the end-time than he is with the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Similarly he does not seem to regard the present as the real end (telos) of history. The end is the millennium and it lies in the future. The present is the final struggle preceding the end. Thus, his great interest in eschatology is perhaps also the result of misunderstanding the New Testament.

A final explanation of Barnabas' concern for eschatology has been suggested by Cadoux. Whereas the early Christians pondered the delay of the Parousia, Cadoux says, the Gnostics remained unconcerned about the problem. In fact, they abandoned the old eschatological views altogether. For the Gnostics the whole course of history was one

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[124]Cullmann, p. 222.

great world-drama. They were not inclined to speak of the future at any length since the future was really insignificant. The present is what matters.[125] Many Gnostics, for example, held that the resurrection had already occurred. Thus Valentinus was willing to keep the formula "the resurrection of the flesh" but reinterpreted it to mean the spiritual ascent of man in this life.[126]

That Gnosticism had infiltrated the Church and especially Egyptian Christianity from a very early date was noted earlier in this chapter. Barnabas' emphasis on a futurist eschatology, then, may well have been in reaction to an incipient Gnosticism. At the same time, however, the epistle must not be taken as an anti-Gnostic tractate. Its main purpose is always to warn against a relapse into Judaism, not Gnosticism.[127]

Allusions to the continuity between Barnabas' eschatology and New Testament eschatology have been made at a number of points. It is difficult, however, to prove that Barnabas was deeply aware of

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[125] Cadoux, p. 222.

[126] Harnack, History of Dogma, p. 261.

[127] Muilenberg, p. 90. "Barnabas represents a point of view and a theological interest later than that of Paul and that of the writer to the Hebrews, but he is clearly unacquainted with the Gnostic theories of Basilides and Valentinus or the polemic of Marcion. While the frequent use of γνῶσις and the anti-Judaism of the writer are reminiscent of these teachers, it would have been impossible for an ecclesiastical teacher like Barnabas to speak as he does if he had known anything of their teachings."

the eschatological tension found in the New Testament.[128] He is more interested in speculating about the end-time than in working out the tension between the "now" and the "not yet." Many students of ancient Church history, then, are prepared to label Barnabas as a radical who greatly depreciated the New Testament emphasis. Barnabas pushed the Parousia, the judgment, and the kingdom almost entirely into the future. For this reason and because of affinities with Jewish apocalyptic, Cullmann, for example, says that Barnabas' speculations are "completely unrelated to the true faith." Because his ideas fail to take into account the full history of salvation they "are absolutely foreign to the eschatology of the Church."[129]

In a somewhat milder way Torrance has explained what he considers the discontinuity between the apostolic and post-apostolic writings. While New Testament eschatology emphasized the nearness of Christ through the Spirit, the post-New Testament writings tried to distinguish between this world (αἰὼν οὗτος) and the world to come (αἰὼν μέλλων).[130] The New Testament eschatological tension

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[128] I John 3:1-3.

[129] Cullmann, p. 161. Cf. also David N. Freedman, "History and Eschatology," Interpretation, XIV (April 1960), 153. Freedman connects history and eschatology as follows: "Revelation always anticipates the mighty deed to come, and the mighty deed invariably had the note of finality about it. For the Bible, history and eschatology are essentially one; eschatology is the conclusion of history but it proceeds from historical occurrences, and history is the setting for the eschaton."

[130] Barn. 4:1.

resulted from the definite historical act of God in Jesus Christ. The eschatological tension of the Apostolic Fathers, on the other hand, was based upon a differentiation between the actual and the ideal. The Christian is not now what he shall be. Therefore, the religious concern must be fixed upon the ideal and the Christian life must be viewed under the aspect of the ideal.[131]

To emphasize discontinuity at the expense of continuity is, however, unfair to Barnabas. He attempted to reproduce what he thought was the apostolic witness. That he veered away from orthodox Christianity on the matter of eschatology is to his discredit. Nevertheless, what continuity with the New Testament one finds is certainly to his credit. Even though Gregory of Nyssa discarded his millennial schema in the fourth century, Barnabas was never branded a heretic. His eschatology may have been somewhat different from the generally accepted view, but the Church has had to deal with worse. Perhaps the following is a fair evaluation of the Christianity during Barnabas' times:

> There is not a particle of evidence that extravagant views on the Parousia were held. There is no fanatical assembling on some mountain-top, like the Millerites, arrayed in white robes, expecting the Lord's sudden descent. They only held, as Christ meant believers to hold, that

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[131]Thomas F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 135.

> His second coming and the end of the world impended over every age, and that they should ever 'be looking and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord.'[132]

Can we at this point begin to speak about a philosophy of history in the epistle of Barnabas? Depending upon one's definition of philosophy we may or we may not. If "philosophy of history" is used in the current sense of a critical philosophy, then the answer must be in the negative. If, however, by a philosophy of history we mean "a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward ultimate meaning,"[133] then the answer may be a qualified "yes." There is some doubt as to whether Barnabas' ideas on history can be regarded as systematized. Nevertheless he follows a principle in the light of which all other events are unified and given meaning. That principal is the imminent return of Christ and the inauguration of the millennial kingdom. Even his "unhistorical" handling of the Old Testament, to which we shall turn later, is designed to give meaning to "the past." There never was a time when the eschaton was unknown to men. Even if in the form of "myths" or "parables" God has still revealed to man what will come to pass in the future.[134]

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[132] Junius B. Remensnyder, The Post-Apostolic Age and Current Problems (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1909), pp. 231-232.

[133] Löwith, p. 1.

[134] Barn. 17:2.

In the future man will be delivered "from all earthiness and evil and, hence, from all history in the common sense of the term."[135] The expectation of that "day" is what gives to history its fullest meaning. However, since the eschaton is a matter of revelation it is perhaps better to say that Barnabas has a theology of history rather than a philosophy of history.[136]

What were the practical implications of this theology of history? This is difficult to assess. Dawson has suggested that the preoccupation of the early Christians with the Parousia distracted them from a lively concern for the future destinies of human civilization.[137] Such distraction, however, was short-lived. The long range effect of second century eschatology was salutary and provided new life for an aging civilization. Thus Erich Frank writes:

> In striving towards this 'community in heaven' the whole human race was to find its unity, its true historical destiny. To be sure, the earliest Christians misunderstood the idea of a kingdom that was to come, and yet is ever present; they expected the world literally to come to an end. The external world did not perish, rather did the

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[135] Anton-Hermann Chroust, "The Relation of Religion to History in Early Christian Thought," The Thomist, XVIII (January 1955), 63.

[136] Cf. Alan Richardson, History Sacred and Profane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 287, where he uses the writings of St. Augustine to illustrate the difference between a philosophy and a theology of history.

[137] Christopher Dawson, The Dynamics of World History (New York: Mentor Omega Books, 1962), pp. 236-237.

> Christians in struggling for their kingdom enliven the rational and political forms of the old civilization with a new spirit. With their ideal of the unity and destiny of mankind, history finally became truly universal.[138]

The central figure in Barnabas' futurist eschatology is God--the God who creates and the God who rules. In the next chapter we shall consider Barnabas' idea of God and His action in the world which He made and whose destiny is in His hands.

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[138]Erich Frank, Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 128.

CHAPTER III

GOD AND THE WORLD

Kelly claims that the Apostolic Fathers are "witnesses to the traditional faith rather than interpreters striving to understand it."[1] What he means is that they are not original thinkers and therefore fail to advance to any significant degree the theology of the New Testament. If Kelly is correct, then on the matter of God and creation it may be expected that Barnabas' ideas will be similar to those of the New Testament. This does not mean, however, that Barnabas' epistle is of little value to the historian. On the contrary, what all of the Apostolic Fathers have to say is of great value. For we are dealing with documents which lie in the closest proximity to the New Testament and "which furnish useful insight into the lines along which the Church's unconscious theology was developing."[2]

The discussion pursued in this chapter may be divided as follows: (1) God as creator of the world and of man; (2) the providence of God; (3) man's relation to the world. Each of these sections will stress the continuity and the discontinuity with biblical thought. In order to bring Barnabas' ideas into clearer focus his relation to the ideas of the other Apostolic Fathers will be noted. Finally, an attempt to

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[1] J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1960), p. 90.

[2] Ibid.

delineate the connection between Barnabas' ideas on creation and his ideas on eschatology will be made.

In the Apostolic Fathers and particularly in the epistle of Barnabas the idea of God cannot be set forth as an isolated idea. Bultmann remarks that theology was not speculatively developed by the Fathers but "God was spoken of only in His relation to the world."[3] Thus theology and cosmology belong together in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers just as they do in the Old and the New Testaments.

There is good reason for this. On the matter of creation these early Fathers exhibit scarcely any Hellenistic influence. Their ideas on God and God's world were largely inherited from the religion of Israel.[4] Thus we find in the epistle of Barnabas a purely monotheistic strain. He believes, along with the other Apostolic Fathers, that God is one and the maker of heaven and earth. Neve comments:

> To all of them God is the Almighty Lord, the Creator, Upholder, and Ruler of the world. Although He created the world, He Himself is not a part of it. He is invisible, incomprehensible, uncreated, everlasting, and in need of nothing. At the same time He is the merciful Father Who manifests Himself as love to men and especially to sinners. He created the world for men and the Church.[5]

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[3]Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), II, 145.

[4]J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), I, 36.

[5]Ibid.

The very first commandment, according to Hermas, is to "believe that God is one who made all things and perfected them, and made all things to be out of that which was not."[6] Robert Grant has contended that the "mandates" of Hermas are his substitutes for the Decalogue. If this is the case, then Hermas has effectively connected the command to "have no other gods before me" with the creation.[7] The epistle of Barnabas does not refer to this commandment nor does it contain any explicit reference to the "oneness" of God. However, the care that the author exercises in the use of the "divine triad" seems to indicate a concern for protecting the unity of God against the polytheism that surrounded early Christianity.[8]

God is the Father and the creator. Clement of Rome exhorts his readers to fix their gaze upon "the Father and creator (κτίστης) of the whole world" (κόσμος).[9] Barnabas does not employ the identical terminology, but expresses the same idea when he asks his readers in the "Two Ways" section to "love thy maker" (τὸν ποιήσαντά σε) and to "fear thy Creator" (τὸν πλάσαντά σε).[10] πλάσις is used

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[6]Hermas, Mandate 1:1.

[7]Robert M. Grant, Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co., 1952), p. 140.

[8]Cf. Barn. 9 where the three persons of the Trinity are mentioned. Although the idea is not framed in an explicit statement, it is quite clear from this chapter that the three persons are one God.

[9]I Clement 19:2.

[10]Barn. 19:2.

infrequently in classical and Christian literature. κτίσις occurs with more frequency. Both words convey the idea of molding or forming as part of the act of creation.[11] Thus the passages cited above describe God in terms of giving form to that which is formless as part of His creative activity.

As the creator of the world God is commonly called "Father." This has already been noted in the passage from I Clement. Barnabas, however, once again fails to conform to Clement's usage. Nowhere in the epistle does he refer to God as Father. Rather, when speaking of God's creative activity, he is content to use the traditional title of κύριος (perhaps in the sense of "owning" the world and man) and πλάστης (a divine being--perhaps in contrast to the Gnostic idea of a demiurge.)[12]

The pagan world of the early second century compelled the Christians to affirm a monotheistic basis for their theology and cosmology. The doctrines of one God and of divine creation coincided and were insisted upon in the early Church as a part of the orthodox faith. Yet a difference of opinion prevailed among these early Christians as to whether the world was created ex nihilo or formed out of pre-existing materials.[13]

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[11]L. W. Barnard, "A Note on Barnabas 6, 8-17," Studia Pastristica, IV (1961), 264. Cf. also Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 672.

[12]Barn. 2:10; 19:2-12.

[13]Arthur C. McGiffert, The God of the Early Christians (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), pp. 155-156.

The Hebrew Bible had not set forth the miracle of creation in an entirely clear and certain way. Grant observes that as a result the opening verses of Genesis were used by the ancients to demonstrate both creation ex nihilo and the coeternity of matter with God.[14] In the apocryphal II Maccabees the mother of the insurrectionists is represented as saying: "I beseech you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed" (οὐκ ἐξ ὄντων).[15] This was later to become a common Jewish doctrine. The earliest Christian assertion of creation ex nihilo, however, is found in the first mandate of Hermas quoted above: "God is one . . . and made all things to be out of that which was not" (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος).[16]

Tillich has commented that it was precisely the narrow definition of creation that separated the early Church decisively from the paganism around it.[17] It is interesting, then, that the epistle of Barnabas is entirely silent on the matter of creation ex nihilo. However, this should not be construed as an indication that Barnabas was not sensitive to the problem of distinguishing pagan and Christian ideas on creation. He was quite likely unable to work out the doctrine

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[14]Grant, Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought, p. 136.

[15]II Maccabees 7:28.

[16]Herman, Mandate 1:1.

[17]Paul Tillich, A History of Christian Thought (Recorded and edited by Peter H. John, n. p., 1956), p. 21.

of creation in a philosophical or even a theological way. Therefore he had to be content to acknowledge the creation of the world as a mystery beyond human comprehension. What he says about creation is at its basis a confession of faith, such faith as "finds in God the source of all existence."[18]

Another term that is used in the Apostolic Fathers to describe God's activity in creation is "despot" (δεσπότης). This title is characteristically used by Clement of Rome to describe God as the "ruler" of the universe. God is "the great Creator (δημιουργός) and Master (δεσπότης) of the universe."[19] Similarly Barnabas employs the term in several instances. "The Lord (ὁ δεσπότης) made known to us through the prophets things past . . . things present . . . things to come."[20] The passage implies that the "despot" is the master and ruler of time. With reference to the last times Barnabas quotes Enoch: "For to this end the Lord (ὁ δεσπότης) has cut short the times and the days."[21] Once again the "despot" is portrayed as the one who controls time and can, at His disposal, foreshorten it.

Barnabas' ideas about God and the world, then, stress, particularly

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[18]Grant, Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought, p. 135.

[19]I Clement 20:11.

[20]Barn. 1:7.

[21]Barn. 4:3.

His universal sovereignty. The Didache can speak of the "Lord Almighty" (δεσπότῃ παντοκράτορ);[22] Clement can speak about "the Master of the universe" (ὁ δεσπότης τῶν ἁπάντων);[23] but Barnabas is more inclined to speak about "God (ὁ θεός), who is the Lord (κυριεύων) over all the world."[24] The consensus of the Fathers is that to God alone belongs the control and sovereignty over reality.[25]

The nature and destiny of man is incorporated into Barnabas' ideas on creation. He, together with the other Christian writings of the period, confesses his faith in the fact that God created man. He quotes from the first chapter of Genesis where God says, "Let us make make in our own image."[26] It is interesting that Barnabas fits this passage into his discussion of the death and resurrection of Christ. While he does not attempt to clarify the relationship, it becomes apparent after some time that Barnabas has rather skillfully summarized the nature and destiny of man. Man is a creature of God, made in God's image, and destined to be raised from the dead as a member of the "new people" of God. God "is the Lord of the world" and stands above all worldly processes. He is the Lord of life and of death. Therefore He can create man and He can resurrect him from the dead.

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[22]Didache 10:3.

[23]I Clement 8:2.

[24]Barn. 21:5.

[25]Kelly, p. 83.

[26]Barn. 5:5.

In the sixth chapter of the epistle the creation of man is discussed again.[27] Here the creation or formation of Adam out of earth (γῆ) is acknowledged. In addition, the first chapter of Genesis is cited to describe how the Father consulted with the Son before making man. The creation of man is said to be "our fair creation" (τὸ καλὸν πλάσμα ἡμῶν). Man's dominion over the lower forms of creation is mentioned as well as the command to procreate and fill the earth. Barnabas makes all of this serve his argument that the redeemed are a new imprint of the image of God. They constitute a new birth and a new creation of the human race.[28]

One additional point on the nature of man should be noted. The epistle of Barnabas in general ascribes to man the freedom of the will. Man, the flower of creation, was endowed with reason and the free power of choice. The latter is particularly evident, though not exclusively, in the "Two Ways" section.[29] There are two ways along which a man may journey in life--the "Way of Light" or the "Way of the Black one." It is for man to decide which he will follow. He is endowed with the freedom to choose. Cadoux notes that man's free will "was emphatically asserted as over against Stoic determinism."[30]

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[27]Barn. 6:9-19.

[28]John Lawson, A Theological and Historical Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961), p. 207.

[29]Barn. 18-20.

[30]Cecil J. Cadoux, The Early Church and the World (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1925), p. 209.

The Apostolic Fathers attempt to portray the role of Jesus in the creation of the world and of man. Hermas says that "the whole creation is supported by the Son of God."[31] Polycarp writes about Christ's session at the right hand of God and quotes a combination of passages from the Pauline Philippians to the effect that all things in heaven and on earth are subject to him.[32] More explicit, however, is Barnabas. He speaks repeatedly of Jesus as the Son of God and the Lord of the world. When God said before the foundation of the world, "Let us make man in our own image," he addressed these words to Jesus.[33] The Son is God's agent in the act of creation, according to Barnabas. Not only is the Son Lord of all, but he is the actual artificer of the world. In discussing the incarnation Barnabas mentions that men are not able to look directly into the center of the sun's rays. Then he adds: "How much more brilliant than the sun is he whose hands fashioned it!"[34] The incarnation was necessary to veil Christ's majestic glory. The Mosaic legislation is said to testify to his glory and to prove that "all things are in him and for him."[35]

Why did God create the world? Barnabas does not address himself to this question unless his reference to man's dominion over the

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[31]Hermas, Similitude IX, 14:5.

[32]Polycarp to the Philippians 2:1.

[33]Barn. 5:5; 6:12.

[34]Barn. 5:10.

[35]Barn. 12:7.

animals is construed as a possible answer. Hermas, on the other hand, offers two ideas. First, he suggests that the creation of the world was not for God's sake. God is really in need of nothing. Therefore, the world was created by God for the sake of man:

> Foolish one without understanding and double-minded, do you not understand the glory of God, how great and mighty and wonderful it is, because he created the world for man's sake, and subdued all his creation to man, and gave him all power, to master all things under heaven?[36]

Secondly, Hermas says that God created the world for the sake of the Church:

> And a revelation was made to me, brethren, while I slept, by a very beautiful young man who said to me, "Who do you think that the ancient lady was from whom you received the little book?" I said, "The Sibyl." "You are wrong," he said, "she is not." "Who is she, then?" I said. "The Church," he said. I said to him, "Why then is she old?" "Because," he said, "she was created the first of all things. For this reason is she old; and for her sake was the world established."[37]

Barnabas does not feel pressed to explain why God created the world. The fact that He did was enough. That God was the creator and the Lord of the world was very important to Barnabas. It meant that God would also have the last word over history. Even though the evil one may offer God opposition in the world, His power would ultimately assert itself in His Kingdom. The meaning of history, now hidden, would then be revealed.[38]

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[36]Hermas, Mandate XII, 4:2.

[37]Hermas, Vision II, 4:1.

[38]Roger L. Shinn, Christianity and the Problem of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 30.

There are a number of passages in the epistle of Barnabas which speak of the providence of God. In fact, especially in two instances the epistle comes close to the later Augustinian view of the control of history by Providence. The first passage has already been considered in the preceding chapter. It will suffice to note it again at this point without going into greater detail. The passage indicated is the apocalyptic reference to the ten kingdoms and the little king.[39] Here Barnabas shows that God controls the destinies of the nations so that history, in its broadest sense, belongs to Him. Similarly, in his discussion of the covenant Barnabas recalls how the Lord revealed to Rebecca that "two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples in thy belly, and one people shall overcome a people, and the greater shall serve the less."[40] Barnabas goes on to draw what he considers the obvious conclusion, that is, that the Lord determined beforehand that Judaism should be replaced by Christianity. He interprets the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh in the same way.[41] God is therefore the creator of all things and the government of the world and the destinies of mankind, especially Jews and Christians, are in His hands.

Barnabas cites the prophecy of Isaiah in order to describe God's relation to the world:

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[39]Barn. 4:4-5.

[40]Barn. 13:2.

[41]Barn. 13:5-7.

> Who has measured the heaven with a span, or the earth with his outstretched hand? Have not I? saith the Lord. Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool, what house will ye build for me, or what is the place of my rest?[42]

God is the Lord over the master and the slave;[43] in fact, He is "the Lord over all the world."[44] Both good and ill come from Him, for "nothing happens without God."[45]

The government of the universe by God should not be regarded as an echo of a contemporary philosophy in Barnabas. His ideas are derived for the main part from the Hebrew Bible and from latter-day Judaism.[46] In the very beautiful section of Clement's letter concerning God's ordering of the cosmos the influence of Stoic philosophy is evident.[47] But not so in Barnabas.

God is one. He has created and He rules all things. What, then,

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[42]Barn. 16:2.

[43]Barn. 19:7.

[44]Barn. 21:5.

[45]Barn. 19:6.

[46]Kelly, p. 83.

[47]Ibid. Cf. also W. C. Van Unnik, "Is I Clement 20 Purely Stoic?" Vigiliae Christianae, IV (1950), 189: "the tinge of Stoic language is unmistakable, but this conception of the universe is subjected to another, the biblical idea of God; the same conception and outlook is found among the Jews and it is not improbable that it formed a part of Jewish catechetical instruction and was known to St. Paul; this piece of Jewish-Christian tradition did fit very well into the fight against the opposition in Corinth (the church is the new 'people of God') and, there being a parallelism with the ruling philosophy in Rome, he brought his ideas up to date by presenting them in a Stoic form."

should be the Christian's relation to the world? The Apostolic Fathers addressed themselves to this question at length. It was their conviction that God's initial creation had been spoiled. Little attempt is made to describe how the creation was spoiled or how "evil" entered into the things which God had made. Perhaps the epistle of Barnabas is more clear on this point than the rest.

Referring to the Jewish misunderstanding of circumcision Barnabas says that "they erred because an evil angel was misleading them."[48] Later on, in the beginning of the "Two Ways" section, he refers to "angels of Satan."[49] J. Armitage Robinson has noted Barnabas' indebtedness to the Pauline Ephesians for his explanation of evil in the world.[50] He suggests that Paul's words be recalled when reading Barnabas: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" and "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."[51] Barnabas is deeply conscious of the "superhuman working (ἐνέργεια) of a personal power of evil."[52] In addition to the references already cited he elsewhere calls this personal power of evil "the Black one,"[53] "the wicked ruler,"[54]

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[48]Barn. 9:4.

[49]Barn. 18:1.

[50]J. Armitage Robinson, Barnabas, Hermas and the Didache (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1920), p. 7.

[51]Eph. 5:16; 2:2.

[52]Robinson, p. 7.

[53]Barn. 4:9; 20:1.

[54]Barn. 4:13.

"the ruler of the present time of iniquity,"[55] and "the worker of evil."[56] Without any further explanations concerning this evil ἐνέργεια Barnabas is content to attribute the spoiling of God's creation to it.

Barnabas ascribes the evil of the world to "the Black One" and also indicates that man, under the influence of evil, contributes to evil's continued existence in the world. Barnabas alone of all the Apostolic Fathers refers to the Genesis account of the fall of man into sin. Admittedly his reference to it is merely in passing. Nevertheless he does comment that "the fall (ἡ παράβασις) took place in Eve through the serpent."[57] This reference ought to be connected with Barnabas' description of the "Way of the Black One." For those who follow that way are "corrupters of God's creation."[58] The fallen man who follows the way of the Black One is also responsible for spoiling God's creation.

The world in which Barnabas and his readers lived was the fallen world. Thus the present time is described as a "time of iniquity"[59] in

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[55]Barn. 18:2.

[56]Barn. 2:1.

[57]Barn. 12:5. It should not be inferred that Barnabas is a proponent of the doctrine of original sin. On the contrary, his reference in 6:11 to "the soul of children" seems to imply that children are without sin.

[58]Barn. 20:2.

[59]Barn. 18:2.

which "lawlessness" and "error" prevail.[60] The "things which now are" are consequently set over against the time "which is to come."[61] Man cannot escape this world. Even the righteous are compelled to walk "in this world" while, at the same time, they look "forward to the holy age."[62] The New Testament tension of being in the world and yet not of the world is retained also in pseudo-Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas. The former says that "the world that is, and the world to come are two enemies" while the latter asserts that "this world is winter for the righteous."[63] Hermas goes even further when he ascribes to worldly possessions a kind of "sacramental value."[64] Since the Christian is a stranger in the world and his citizenship is in heaven, earthly transactions become "sacred expenditures," the purchasing of afflicted souls becomes more important than buying lands and houses, and wealth becomes a trust from God.[65]

McGiffert has summarized the attitude of the early Christians toward the world as one of detachment. One cannot be friends with both the present and the future world. Therefore the Christian must detach

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[60]Barn. 4:1.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Barn. 10:11.

[63]II Clement 6:3; Hermas, Similitude III, 2.

[64]Robert R. Williams, A Guide to the Teachings of the Early Church Fathers (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 27.

[65]Ibid. Cf. Hermas, Similitude I.

himself from the world in which he now lives. This detachment is heightened by the belief in the imminent return of Christ and the destruction of the present order of things.[66]

The world and its institutions were regarded as inherently and characteristically evil. Particularly evil in the sight of the early Christians was the Imperium Romanum. How this hostile attitude toward the state developed is difficult to say. Its roots may lie in the various elements of Jewish apocalyptic.[67] Christianity had grown out of Judaism and the Jews were especially vigorous in their opposition to Rome. The Sybilline Oracles are full of anti-Roman prophecies; the Psalms of Solomon and the Assumption of Moses show bitter hatred of Rome.[68] The ordinary Christian's anticipation of the imminent return of Christ involved also a belief in the "downfall of the Empire and the punishment of persecutors--however he might express it or refrain from expressing it."[69] The idea of deposing rulers from their thrones was always a part of the Jewish apocalyptic program.

There is only one explicit reference in the epistle of Barnabas which implies an antagonistic attitude toward the state. This reference

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[66]Arthur C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), I, 79.

[67]Cadoux, p. 440.

[68]Joseph W. Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies: Opposition History under the Roman Empire," Classical Philology, XXXV (January 1940), 15-16.

[69]Cadoux, p. 175.

was discussed elsewhere in a different context. Here it should be enough to indicate along with Swain that the early Christians eventually gathered into their systems nearly all of the criticism of the current empire and made rather frequent use especially of Daniel's prophecy.[70] Barnabas can certainly be mentioned in this context since he refers to Hadrian's erection of the temple to Capitoline Jupiter as "the final stumbling block" and then goes on to cite Daniel's succession of kingdoms.[71]

It is interesting that this is the only reference in Barnabas to a hostile attitude toward Rome. Barnabas expected Rome to be destroyed at the Parousia. However, he was no revolutionary and his epistle is not meant to fan the flames of revolution among his readers. Perhaps if what the other Fathers said about the state is also taken into consideration, a fairly complete view of Barnabas' attitude toward the state will result.

In the Apostolic Fathers one can detect a spirit of accommodation over against the empire. The Church had been called by God to live under the present form of government. Therefore it had best accommodate itself to the empire until such a time when God would destroy it and establish His Kingdom. In the "Two Ways" section Barnabas calls for obedience to "masters as a type of God."[72] The impression one receives

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[70]Swain, p. 18.

[71]Barn. 4:3-4.

[72]Barn. 19:7. Cf. W. M. Ramsay, The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), p. 309.

from this passage is that Barnabas favored the strict observance of existing laws. Clement of Rome explains that earthly rulers derive their authority from God and then asks that the Corinthians pray for them.[73] "Learn to be submissive" is his fundamental axiom over against the state. Gougel comments that submissiveness "is the principle which must rule the Church's life both internally by obedience to the established leaders and externally by submission to the political authorities."[74] Paul taught submission to the state.[75] But Clement carries Paul's teaching much further in his great liturgical prayer where he pleads for obedience to God and to the governors and rulers on earth. Here seems to be the beginning, at least, of the traditional teaching of the Church on the two realms of Nature and Grace.[76]

The Christian's relation to the world is aptly and somewhat critically summarized by McGiffert as follows:

> The ideal was less to live as good citizens of the state, as good husbands, parents, neighbors, tradesmen, and the like, than as heirs of heaven, where all such relationships are done away. There was no thought of trying to reform the world. To escape from it rather than to make

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[73] I Clement 61:1-3.

[74] Maurice Goguel, The Birth of Christianity (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), pp. 552-553.

[75] Cf. Rom. 13.

[76] W. K. Lowther Clarke, The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1937), p. 29.

> it better was the aim. The attitude was similar to that of the Gnostics but not so extreme, for it was not due to the belief in a radical dualism between matter and spirit as theirs was.[77]

As stated earlier, the movement of biblical history is from the creation of heaven and earth to the vision of a new heaven and a new earth. There is, therefore, a definite eschatological element in the Bible's doctrine of creation. The same holds true of the epistle of Barnabas and, for that matter, all Judeo-Christian theology. Danielou has asserted that Judeo-Christian theology is best described as a theology of history with a marked cosmic character. Woven into the cosmic character of this theology is the parallelism between the first and the second creation.[78] God is the God of action who lifts up and brings down the curtain of history--"the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the beginning and the end."[79]

In the New Testament the emphasis on creation is usually in terms of "the new, eschatological creation effected in Christ."[80] The epistle of Barnabas has a similar emphasis. One of the baptismal sections of the epistle bears this out when it affirms that the

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[77] McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, p. 79.

[78] Cf. R. P. McGuire, "A History of the Church From Pentecost to 604: A Survey of Research, 1954-1958," Theological Studies, XX (March 1959), 92-93.

[79] Rev. 22:13. Cf. also Grant, Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought, p. 138.

[80] Ibid.

sacrament works a great change in the recipient. Christians have been made new (ἀνακαινίσας) by the remission of sins and have been given the soul of children "as though he were creating us afresh."[81] Continuing on, this section refers to "a second creation (δευτέραν πλάσιν) which will occur in the "last days" when Christ returns. Supporting the idea of a second creation is the Lord's dictum that the last things will be made as the first, a sort of repristination theology.[82] This will be the "holy age" when "there is no more sin" and "all things have been made new (καινῶν) by the Lord."[83] A definite eschatological thrust is thus imposed upon Barnabas' ideas of creation. The creation of the world and of man is viewed and interpreted from the vantage point of the new creation. It is because of his knowledge of the future that Barnabas can speak of the first and the last creation. The Lord shall be praised for "he has given us knowledge of the past, and wisdom for the present, and that we are not without understanding for the future."[84]

Barnabas' ideas on God and the world are a vital part of his theology of history. History is a straight line running from the

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[81] Barn. 6:8-17.

[82] Matt. 19:30.

[83] Barn. 10:11; 15:7. Cf. Hans Windisch, Der Barnabasbrief (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1920), p. 366: "So spärlich im ganzen die eschatologischen Hinweise sind, so zeigt der Vf. doch noch kenntnis von einem Grundelement der ganzen Eschatologie, der Entsprechung von Urzeit und Endzeit, von Weltschopfung und Welt neuerung."

[84] Barn. 5:3.

beginning (creation) to the eschaton (new creation). By accepting this linear concept of history Barnabas cuts himself away from the classical Greek view. The cyclical view of time and history among the Greek philosophers is replaced with an eschatological anticipation of the end of this work and the beginning of the world which is to come.

CHAPTER IV

THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

The Christian view of history is not merely the conviction that divine providence directs the course of history but that God decisively intervenes in the life of mankind at certain definite points.[1] The supreme instance of God's intervention, according to the New Testament, is the incarnation of Jesus. The incarnation sums up the totality of history--past, present, and future. What was promised in the past, the purpose of the present, and what is expected in the future are all dependent upon his coming in the flesh.

Prestige has pointed out that some of the early Church Fathers acknowledged God's providential activity in nature, human history, and the sphere of grace. He adds that they believed the incarnation to be the chief point in that divine providence. In fact, Prestige says, from the third century onward the word οἰκονομία was used to refer specifically to the incarnation.[2]

As was noted earlier, the primary purpose of the epistle of Barnabas is to ward off a relapse into Judaism on the part of his readers. In carrying out this purpose Barnabas attempts to provide his

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[1] Christopher Dawson, The Dynamics of World History (New York: Menton Omega Books, 1962), p. 233.

[2] G. L. Prestige, God In Patristic Thought (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1952), p. 67.

readers with perfect understanding (γνῶσις). A quick survey of the various usages of γνῶσις in the epistle reveals that Barnabas is apparently trying to impart to his readers an exact understanding of the economy of salvation.[3] This attempt may have been in reaction to Jewish and Gnostic propaganda in Alexandria. According to Judaism the Suffering Servant had not yet come and the incarnation, as Christians understood it, had never occurred. The Gnostics attacked the economy of salvation on a much broader scale by denying "the unity of God, his creative power, his love, his work of redemption, and the potential goodness of the created world and of life in it."[4] In the face of such propaganda the leaders of the early Church found it necessary to present a unified and intelligible picture of God's intervention in history.

Barnabas attempts to explain God's intervention by focusing upon the incarnation of Jesus. The value of the incarnation for Barnabas is underscored by Christ's pre-existence. He says that God consulted with the Son concerning the creation of man before the foundations of the world were laid.[5] In explanation of how the covenant was given to Christians Barnabas points to Christ: "He was prepared for this purpose," that is, he pre-existed and was finally made manifest in the flesh in

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[3] The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), II, 299.

[4] Robert M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 184-185.

[5] Barn. 5:5; 6:12.

order that he might make the convenant of salvation with the Christians.[6] Kelly adds that Barnabas developed a "Spirit-Christology" in the process.[7] The pre-existent Son of God was divine spirit and was united with the historical Jesus at the incarnation. Thus Barnabas could say that the body which Christ offered on the cross was "the vessel of the spirit."[8]

Although he was the Son of God and the Lord of the world, Jesus appeared on earth in the flesh. No attempt is made to explain how Jesus became man. More important to Barnabas is the fact that Jesus was made incarnate and the reasons for his incarnation. Employing the parable of the sun, so popular in Alexandrian theology,[9] Barnabas explains the necessity of the incarnation as follows:

> For if he had not come in the flesh men could in no way have been saved by beholding him; seeing that they have not the power when they look at the sun to gaze straight at its rays, though it is destined to perish, and is the work of his hands.[10]

Moreover, Jesus became flesh in order that by his own death and resurrection he might destroy the power of death[11] and fulfill what

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[6]Barn. 14:5.

[7]J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1960), pp. 143-144.

[8]Barn. 7:3.

[9]Cf. Johannes Quasten, Patrology (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950), I, 87.

[10]Barn. 5:10.

[11]Barn. 5:5-7.

the prophets had foretold about his sufferings.[12]

Peculiar to Barnabas is a somewhat negative explanation of the incarnation. Barnabas seems to think of history as a stage on which God's purposes are acted out. One of God's purposes was to bring judgment upon the Jews for their rejection and misunderstanding of His revelation to them. The Son of God was therefore made incarnate in order that "he might complete the total of the sins of those who persecuted his prophets to death."[13] Lietzmann notes that the "Pauline motif of stiff-neckedness is thus presented without any reconciliation at the conclusion."[14] Jesus appeared in the flesh to reinstitute God's covenant by preparing a new people and by placing the final seal of rejection on Israel. In Jesus there is deliverance from darkness and release from the chains of death.

It is interesting to compare Barnabas' ideas with those of Ignatius. In his letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius writes: "For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary by the dispensation (οἰκονομίαν) of God."[15] Jesus' conception is thus a part of the divine economy. Elsewhere his birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and Parousia are all fitted into God's plan of salvation. The

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[12]Barn. 5:12-6:7.

[13]Barn. 5:11.

[14]Hans Lietzmann, A History of the Early Church (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1961), I, 218.

[15]Ignatius to the Ephesians 18:2.

particular term (οἰκονομία) employed to describe the economy is not peculiar to Ignatius or to the Apostolic Fathers in general. The author of the canonical Ephesians had already spoken about God's "plan (οἰκονομία) for the fulness of time" a decade or so earlier.[16]

The term οἰκονομία is strangely absent from the epistle of Barnabas although the idea of an economy is not. If Barnabas' references to Christ are brought together it becomes evident that his Christology is developed within the larger framework of an economy of salvation. It seems, then, that he could have employed the term especially when citing the prophecy of Isaiah to explain why the covenant was taken away from the Jews and given to the Christians.[17] Barnabas, however, apparently does not have "economy" as a part of his theological vocabulary.

L. W. Barnard recently attempted to prove that the epistle of Barnabas is actually a homily to be read at the annual Paschal Vigil.[18] Assuming that Barnard is correct, for his study is quite convincing, the so-called epistle of Barnabas should contain a rather fully developed

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[16]Eph. 1:10. Cf. also 3:9.

[17]Barn. 14:9; cf. Isaiah 61:1,2. Cf. also Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, editors, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1948), VI, 179, where this reference is explained as an allusion to the Jewish year of jubilee and as "a type of the whole period of the Christian dispensation, in which men are freed from the slavery of sin and the Devil, and grace and heaven are restored."

[18]L. W. Barnard, "The Epistle of Barnabas--A Paschal Homily?," Vigiliae Christianae, XV (1961), 8-22.

recitation of the divine economy of salvation. The Paschal Feast commemorated the whole redemptive work of Christ--his sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and second advent. That the sufferings of Christ play a prominent role in Barnabas' epistle is obvious from his use of πάσχω thirteen times, twelve of which refer to Christ. Barnard connects πάσχω with ὑπομένω as they appear in the epistle and finds one consequent theme of the writer to be: Jesus endured to suffer. He uses this to support the thesis that Barnabas is a Paschal Homily since "Jesus endured to suffer" is not normally included in the creedal formulae of the Apostolic Fathers.

Jesus is said to have suffered willingly, on a tree, at the hand of man, and "in order that his wounding might make us alive."[19] In two instances it is stated that Jesus was "destined to suffer" μέλλων πάσχειν[20] indicating that while he suffered willingly it was nevertheless a necessary part of the divine economy. Aspects other than the suffering of Christ are not overlooked by Barnabas. The resurrection, the judgment, and the ascension are all given their place.[21] However, the sufferings of Christ seem to be predominant.

The economy of salvation consists of a recitation of historical events. These events claim to have a significance that gives precise

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[19]Barn. 5:5,13; 6:7,9; 7:2.

[20]Barn. 7:10; 12:2.

[21]Barn. 5:6-7; 6:2-4; 15:9.

unity to the historical process. For that reason the Paschal recitation was set against the background of events that had occurred many years earlier. In Barnabas' epistle it is the events connected with the Exodus that serve as background for the economy. Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai where he received the covenant from the Lord. However, the people of Israel turned to idols during Moses' absence. As he descended from the mountain and saw the people's lawlessness he cast down the stones of the covenant, "and their covenant was broken, in order that the covenant of Jesus the Beloved should be sealed in our hearts in hope of his faith."[22]

In the sixth chapter the recitation of God's activity is concentrated on baptism, certainly a significant topic for a Paschal Vigil. Here again the discussion is carried on in the Exodus setting. Moses brought out the Israelites from Egypt in order to lead them into "a land flowing with milk and honey."[23] Barnard comments elsewhere that the epistle, in this section, equates ἰησοῦς with Jesus who suffered as the second Adam. Furthermore, the author's reference to the land (ἰησοῦς) flowing with milk and honey signifies entry into Christ through baptism. Barnard adds that this clearly indicates that the sacrament is regarded as having its origin in the passion of Christ.[24]

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[22]Barn. 4:7-8.

[23]Barn. 6:8-17.

[24]L. W. Barnard, "A Note on Barnabas 6, 8-17," Studia Patristica, IV (1961), 264.

A considerable block of material in chapter twelve is built into the framework of the Exodus.[25] The encounter of the Israelites with the Amalekites at Rephidim is cited as an incentive toward obedience to Jesus. Also, the brazen serpent incident is mentioned in an attempt to explain how the death of Christ gives life to man. Finally, "Jesus, the son of Naue," or Moses' successor, is portrayed as a type of Christ in whom was revealed "everything concerning his Son Jesus."

A last reference to the Exodus occurs in the fourteenth chapter and is a repetition, although in much more striking detail, of the section from chapter four cited above.[26] The breaking of the tables of stone by Moses is used to explain how the covenant was taken away from the Jews and given directly by the Lord to the Christians:

> Moses received it, but they were not worthy. But learn how we receive it. Moses received it when he was a servant, but the Lord himself gave it to us, as the people of the inheritance, by suffering for our sakes.

Earlier it was noted that the historical events of the divine economy claim to give unity to the historical process and that the Exodus in some way is made to serve this unity. The intention is, of course, to bring past, present, and future together within the economy of salvation. The events of the Exodus period represent the past. The present is the time of the author and his readers. The future is the millennial rest followed by the "eighth day" of eternity. It

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[25] Barn. 12:2-9.

[26] Barn. 14:1-4; cf. 4:7-8.

is precisely in connection with the latter that the unity of the historical process is best expressed in the epistle of Barnabas.

The passage called into question is perhaps a part of the Paschal recitation: "Wherefore we also celebrate with gladness the eighth day in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into Heaven."[27] One is immediately struck by the close juxtaposition of the resurrection, manifestation, and ascension of Christ. Harnack has noted that for Barnabas the ascension into heaven occurred on the day of the resurrection.[28] Barnard supplies two other possibilities.[29] First, the author of the epistle believed the resurrection and ascension to have taken place on a Sunday but with a period of time in between. καὶ φανερωθείς would then refer to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus as recorded in the gospels. Barnard's second suggestion is that the writer probably had in mind the whole drama of redemption when he penned these words. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ are brought together without any consideration of time-intervals between these events. Barnard sums up: "The various historical 'moments' stood for him together as part

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[27]Barn. 15:9.

[28]Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910), I, 203.

[29]Barnard, "The Epistle of Barnabas--A Paschal Homily?," Vigiliae Christianae, pp. 14-15.

of the good news revealed in Christ."[30]

However, the resurrection and ascension stand not only in close juxtaposition to each other but also to the "eighth day" which follows. Barnabas expected the end to come soon since Jesus had risen from the dead and had ascended into heaven, from whence he comes "to judge the living and the dead."[31] Again, then, within the context of the economy of salvation all historical "moments" are brought together. Together they present a unified continuous movement. The Old Testament narratives, the history of Jesus, and the Parousia are not separated by intervals of time within the economy of salvation. They are a unified whole.

If the so-called epistle of Barnabas is in reality a Paschal homily then, because of its Alexandrian parentage, it would have been read on a Sunday. Barnard notes the close connection in chapter fifteen between the Parousia and Christian worship as support for this. In addition, he affirms that there is evidence up to the third century that Jesus' return was expected at Eastertide.[32] Thus the epistle of Barnabas, considered in terms of a Paschal homily, presents the

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[30]Cf. F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of Acts (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), p. 40. Discussing the Luke-Acts account of the ascension, Bruce says: "In the apostolic preaching the resurrection and ascension of Christ seem to represent one continuous movement, and both together constitute his exaltation."

[31]Barn. 7:2.

[32]Barnard, "The Epistle of Barnabas--A Paschal Homily?," Vigiliae Christianae, pp. 14-15. In support of his view Barnard lists the following references: Ep. Apostolorum 6; Tert. de Bapt. 19; Hippolytus Com. on Dan. 4,55,1 seq.

following historical themes: the sufferings of the incarnate Christ together with resurrection and redemption in him, "the whole set against the background of the Exodus and entry into the Promised Land."[33]

From the preceding discussion it is apparent that Barnabas deals with the history of God's covenant people. His concern with covenant history is from a Christological point of view. It might be suggested, then, that Barnabas could substitute the term covenant (διαθήκη) for economy (οἰκονομία) in the epistle, using "covenant" to convey the same meaning as contained in "the economy of salvation."

The identification of "covenant" and "economy" seems almost impossible in the epistle of Barnabas at first. Leon Morris explains that the word διαθήκη is used regularly in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew בְּרִית, the common word for "covenant." The difficulty arises in non-biblical Greek where διαθήκη almost always denotes a last will and testament.[34] However, John Reumann recently showed that οἰκονομία and διαθήκη were used interchangably in an Egyptian papyrus text from the latter part of the second century.[35] The text is printed in the collection Ägyptische

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[33]Ibid., p. 21. Barnard cites additional themes of the epistle which are not "historical" and are therefore not particularly appropos to this study: catechetical instruction and moral duties, Baptism and perhaps the Eucharist.

[34]Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 61.

[35]John Reumann, "Oikonomia = 'Covenant'; Terms for Heilsgeschichte In Early Christian Usage," Novum Testamentum, III (1959), 282-292.

Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museum zu Berlin, Grieschische Urkunden, Number 321, Column II, line 10, through III, 20. At Column III, line 2, the following appears:

Ἐπεὶ δὲ παρεισ[κ]ὲξ αὐτῶν τέσσαρες, ἔτι δὲ καὶ ὁ νομικὸς ὁ τὴν οἰκονομίαν ἀράς. [...] [...]ὴν διαθήκην ἐπιφερέων τοὺς [...] οὐθενοῦς καὶὰ τὰς ἐκε[ι]ου τὸ [...] ταύτην λυθῆναι.

Reumann translates: "And since there are present four of them, and in addition also the notary who wrote the document, . . . bringing forth the will of the kinsman in accordance with the . . . of that man . . . that this (the will) be opened." Here then, in this record of the magistrate Apollonios concerning the genuineness of a will that had been presented for probate, οἰκονομία is used for διαθήκη.

This interchange between economy and covenant has rather interesting implications. It has already been observed how the author of the canonical Ephesians uses οἰκονομία to signify God's plan of salvation. Reumann calls attention to a passage from Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians where reference is made to "the dispensation (οἰκονομίας) of the new man Jesus Christ," that is, to the new covenant relationship Christ has initiated with mankind.[36] After the time of Ignatius, Reumann says, οἰκονομία was employed rather frequently by the Church Fathers with reference to the covenants through which God was working out His

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[36]Ignatius to the Ephesians 20:1.

plan of salvation for man. Prestige points out that for the Fathers the principal meaning of οἰκονομία was "the covenanted dispensation of grace" in the Old Testament or through Christ.[37] Οἰκονομία thus amounts to what is currently understood by Heilsgeschichte. And since οἰκονομία is associated with the covenants through which God works out His plan, the term is, for all practical purposes, interchangable with διαθήκη. Thus the equation: οἰκονομία plus διαθήκη equals Heilsgeschichte.

While Barnabas does not use the term οἰκονομία, the term διαθήκη is used with considerable frequency. On the basis of the preceding discussion, it may therefore be suggested that Barnabas presents covenant history in his epistle, or, Heilsgeschichte. He is at pains to explain how God's economy of salvation unfolded in time and how it would unfold in the time to come. He wants to show, above all, how the covenant was taken from the Jews and given to the Christians. But Barnabas' covenant history is unique in that it is overly Christological. In other words, the incarnation of Jesus does not appear to be the focal point of all history for Barnabas. Jesus Christ is in all of history regardless of the incarnation. He is in all of the Old Testament (past), in all of the present time, and in all of the future. The incarnation thus seems to be no more significant than the revelation of Jesus Christ in the dietary laws of the Old Testament or in the divine command issued to Abraham concerning the

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[37]Prestige, p. 64.

circumcision of his servants. In short, Jesus Christ is history--all of it!

There are many allusions in the epistle of Barnabas to the suffering and death of Christ as effecting man's salvation. The idea of the atonement, however, is quite weak. Torrance opines that Barnabas is far from clear on the significance of the death of Christ while Kelly asserts that Barnabas lacks "any real appreciation of the truth that through Christ's assumption of human nature the infusion of new life into fallen humanity has been made possible."[38] The conventional formula that "Christ died for us" is retained in the epistle. Yet the atoning value of Christ's death receives only minor consideration. Of principal interest to Barnabas is the interpretation of Christ as the lawgiver and the bestower of knowledge.[39] Torrance has thus noted that "salvation" in Barnabas is twofold: (1) objective, that is, redemption through Christ's sacrificial self-offering, and (2) subjective, that is, deliverance from darkness and death through an act of renewal and divinely imparted knowledge.[40]

A number of different purposes are therefore ascribed to the

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[38]Thomas F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 101. Kelly, p. 166.

[39]Ibid., p. 165.

[40]Torrance, p. 100-101. Cf. J. F. Bethune-Baker, An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1903), p. 68.

death of Christ. His flesh was delivered up to corruption so that "we should be sanctified by the remission of sin, that is, by his sprinkled blood."[41] Jesus suffered so that "they may know that they cannot be saved if they do not hope on him"[42] and "that his wounding might make us alive."[43] Through his death men are healed[44] and death itself is annulled.[45] Christ's death redeems man from darkness[46] and bestows upon him the new covenant as an inheritance.[47] Christ's self-offering was "not made by man,"[48] a fact which is confirmed by the divine victory over death in his resurrection.[49] Torrance sums up:

> The importance of the death of Christ lies largely in the fact that through it the old order was brought to an end; that death was destroyed and on that basis the new Covenant grounded; that it was the means of the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ which established the possibility of our resurrection and so brought the acceptable and comforting word of assurance.[50]

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[41] Barn. 5:1; cf. also 7:3; 11:1; 16:8.

[42] Barn. 12:3,7.

[43] Barn. 7:2.

[44] Barn. 5:2; 12:7.

[45] Barn. 5:6.

[46] Barn. 14:5; 16:9.

[47] Barn. 14:5.

[48] Barn. 2:6.

[49] Barn. 5:6,7.

[50] Torrance, p. 103.

Barnabas can therefore rejoice in the "hope of salvation."[51] The incarnation of Christ makes this hope possible: "For if he had not come in the flesh men could in no way have been saved by beholding him."[52] He became incarnate, suffered, died, rose and ascended. However, all of God's plan of salvation is ultimately dependent upon the incarnation. And God's plan is enveloped by an eschatological thrust in that the fulfillment of salvation is associated with the time of the kingdom of Jesus.[53]

The acts of salvation in Christ were instrumental in establishing the new covenant on the basis of which men may hope to be saved. However, when all of Barnabas' ideas on salvation are brought together it becomes apparent that salvation is finally conditional on the believer himself.[54] This was McGiffert's contention with respect to the Apostolic Fathers generally.[55] These Fathers were said to represent a Christianity which was quite different from Paul's. The difference lay in the fact that while Paul thought of salvation in terms of God's grace, the Apostolic Fathers thought of it in terms of a moral system "similar to the Judaism of the dispersion but

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[51]Barn. 1:3.

[52]Barn. 5:10; 16:10.

[53]Barn. 8:6.

[54]Torrance, p. 104.

[55]Arthur C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), I, 68ff.

stripped of all racial and national features." To obey the Law of God, then would gain for the individual eternal life while disobedience would merit eternal punishment. The final judgment was therefore kept before the early Christian as a means of spurring them on to obedience. Thus Barnabas:

> The Lord will "judge" the world "without respect of persons." Each will receive according to his deeds. If he be good his righteousness will lead him, if he be evil the reward of iniquity is before him. Let us never rest as though we were 'called' and slumber in our sins, lest the wicked ruler gain power over us and thrust us out from the kingdom of the Lord.[56]

Barnabas clearly ascribes the possibility of a moral life to the new creation which is effected in baptism. After the remission of sins in baptism man becomes new, "being created again from the beginning."[57] By the remission of sins in baptism man is made "another type" since he is now re-created (ἀναπλάσσειν).[58] However, according to the moralistic view of the epistle, the forgiveness of sins is a single forgiveness, that is, only in connection with one's entrance into the Church by baptism.[59] After his baptism man must journey the

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[56]Barn. 4:12,13. Cf. John Lawson, A Theological and Historical Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961), pp, 204-205. Lawson says that Barnabas' appeal to the fear of the coming judgment is "so far as it goes, a legitimate ground of ethical appeal, though by no means the highest."

[57]Barn. 16:8.

[58]Barn. 6:11.

[59]The idea which is explicit in the Shepherd of Hermas is implicit in Barn. 16:7f. where man is described as corrupt prior to his baptism and as sinless after his baptism.

Way of Light (ὁδὸς τοῦ φωτός) without faltering. It is the Way of Light that leads one to salvation in the kingdom of God. If he wishes to arrive at "the appointed place" he must "be zealous in his works."[60] Only he who practices the works of the Way of Light "shall be glorified in the kingdom of God."[61]

Although Christ secured the victory over sin and evil, the present for Barnabas was still a time of distress and lawlessness. "The days are evil," he says, and "the worker of evil himself is in power."[62] Even those who had embraced the new covenant through faith[63] were in danger of being hurled away from life by the evil one.[64] Salvation is therefore uncertain and the Christian life constitutes a manly struggle to win the prize. There is no time for rest, "lest the wicked ruler gain power over us."[65] We must earnestly avoid the works of lawlessness, "that we may be loved in that time which is to come."[66] As

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[60]Barn. 19:1.

[61]Barn. 21:1.

[62]Barn. 2:1.

[63]Cf. Barn. 1:4, "because great faith and love dwell in you." Harnack, p. 172 says: "the importance of faith which was regarded as the basis of hope and knowledge and obedience in a holy life, was at the same time (as the plain and exhaustive expression of the Gospel) in every respect perceived."

[64]Barn. 2:10.

[65]Barn. 4:13.

[66]Barn. 4:1.

the world nears its end the times will become increasingly evil. When Christians are thus called upon to suffer they should remember that it has a sacramental character. For "those who will see me, and attain my kingdom must lay hold of me through pain and suffering."[67] Therefore one should seek out the ordinances (δικαιώματα) of the Lord in faith, supported by fear, patience, and long-suffering.[68]

The moral conduct enjoined by Barnabas upon his readers was conduct suitable for those who were citizens of another world. Christians were believed to be the elect people of God, a "third race," and a special possession to God.[69] Their citizenship was in heaven. Consequently they were anxious for Christ's return and interested in the significance of the time preceding the Parousia. The Gnostics said that there was no interval between the first and second comings of Christ. In fact, they suggested that the soul was imprisoned in the body for a million myriad of years and that time had no meaning at all.[70] Christians, however, were convinced that God had given them bodies for a good purpose and that in their bodies they were to receive instruction, perfect their training, and complete their probation.[71] Thus the time

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[67]Barn. 7:11.

[68]Barn. 2:1,2.

[69]McGiffert, p. 77.

[70]Roland H. Bainton, Early and Medieval Christianity (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 10.

[71]Ibid.

preceding the Parousia was given a moral and legalistic emphasis in preparation for the salvation which was to come.

Salvation seems to be a future event in the epistle of Barnabas and not something already in the possession of the believer, as Paul had pictured it. The possibility of enjoying salvation was dependent upon one's fulfillment of the conditions of the covenant into which he entered at baptism. The Christian must therefore strive to fulfill the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. But in order to do this he must have a clear idea of what the δικαιώματα are. It is by means of γνῶσις that the divine ordinances are perceived. Torrance explains γνῶσις as follows:

> Gnosis is the new perception given at Baptism and based on the revelation of Jesus. It goes beyond ordinary faith, and is regarded as the higher perfection of wisdom which is enabled to grasp the underlying principles (ἀρχή and τέλος) of sacred history, in such fashion as to initiate the soul into the final purpose of God. It is, in fact, ability to make spiritual use of the Old Testament and transmute its ordinances into articles of saving value (i.e. δικαιώματα). It was, Barnabas holds, for this precise purpose that the Old Testament was written, and it is the duty of Christians to seek out there spiritual principles and apply them to the Christian life and thought, and it is assumed throughout that the application of such spiritual knowledge has saving action.[72]

The events of the divine economy, interpreted by spiritual γνῶσις, are regarded by Barnabas as real historical events. Nowhere does he indicate, for example, that the resurrection of Jesus did not really occur but was merely the Church's confession of faith

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[72] Torrance, pp. 106-107.

in Christ's power over death. For Barnabas the events of the economy of salvation are concrete historical events.

There were some, however, who attempted to deny the historical reality of God's plan of salvation. The Docetists taught that Christ had not taken a body for himself and that he had suffered only in appearance on the cross. Christ was indeed the Son of God, "but he was not truly man, for His humanity was only a vain illusion."[73] Ignatius' letters are full of pleas that the church of Asia Minor would not abandon a belief in Christ's humanity and in the historical events connected with it.[74] Bigg has observed that Docetism turns not only the life of Jesus but also the life of the believer into a semblance and thereby sweeps away the whole economy of salvation.[75] It may be assumed that Barnabas and his readers were confronted by these dangers of Docetism. If so, it is then easy to understand Barnabas' insistence upon the historic realities of the divine economy.

In Clement's eyes the Church and its organizational structure played an essential role in bringing salvation to mankind. Barnabas, too, speaks of the church and suggests that its activity should be

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[73]G. Bardy, The Church at the End of the First Century (London: Sands and Co., 1938), p. 116.

[74]R. L. P. Milburn, Early Christian Interpretations of History (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1954), p. 27. Milburn also comments that Ignatius attempts to safeguard the principle that Christianity depends upon historic fact. The same may be said of Barnabas.

[75]Charles Bigg, The Origins of Christianity (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909), pp. 111-112.

directed toward "the common good." Exhorting his readers to steadfastness he says: "Do not by retiring apart live alone as if you were already made righteous, but come together and seek out the common good."[76] Barnabas is obviously speaking about the coming together of Christian people. Therefore, this reference may be interpreted in terms of the Church. It is quite possible that the Christians whom Barnabas addresses were fond of the ascetis and encratite practices promoted in the Gospel according to the Hebrews.[77] This gospel was known to Clement of Alexandria and was probably read by the Jewish Christians living in Egypt.[78] Whatever the case, the Christian community or the Church in Egypt tended to retire to a life of solitude thereby shirking their social responsibilities. Barnabas is obliged to remind them that they should come together as the Church in order "to seek out the common good." The latter may be taken in either the spiritual or the material sense.

Clement and Ignatius write about the Church with greater insight than Barnabas. Clement conceives of the Church as an institution for the education of the faithful. His ideas on the Church look forward to the catholic formula, "outside the Church, no salvation."[79] Ignatius

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[76]Barn. 4:10.

[77]L. W. Barnard, "The Problem of the Epistle of Barnabas," The Church Quarterly Review, CLIX (1958), 216.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Maurice Goguel, The Birth of Christianity (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), pp. 390-391.

sees in the "catholic church--an expression he coined--a continuation of the mystery of the incarnation.[80] Barnabas, however, is content to remain silent on the matter although his ideas on baptism and his references to "the new people" whom God has called into existence presuppose an ecclesiology of some sort.

It has been noted at a number of points that the economy of salvation is enveloped in an eschatological atmosphere. The incarnation, the passion, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ are all prelude to the consummation of the redemptive drama in the coming of the kingdom. Salvation is always future and whatever precedes it, be it the typological revelation of Christ in the Old Testament, or the events of Christ's life, or the time of the Church, is an anticipation of the golden age that lied ahead. Thus Chroust says: "The joyous surrender to the future and to the definite promises it holds becomes the decisive trend within the conception of history held by the early Christians."[81]

An analysis of the economy of salvation in Barnabas' epistle leads to yet another conclusion. If history is a chain of events linked to one another in causal sequence, then the fact of Jesus Christ proves "that in this sense there never was any history because God is

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[80]Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), II, 659-660.

[81]Anton-Hermann Chroust, "The Relation of Religion to History in Early Christian Thought," The Thomist, XVIII (January 1955), 69.

the Lord of all events."[82] The casual sequence of events can be interrupted by God with the introduction of something entirely new. This Barnabas clearly believes. Yet he would probably also agree that "there is in events a sequence arising solely from the purpose of God to culminate the drama of redemption."[83] History is thus the stage upon which God's plan of salvation is unfolded and realized and ultimately fulfilled in the establishment of the millennial kingdom.

In conclusion, it should be admitted that the numerous references to the life and work of Christ in the epistle of Barnabas are often confused, obscure, and perhaps even pointless. McGiffert is probably right when he accuses Barnabas of failing to develop a "reasoned theory of the way of salvation."[84] Nevertheless he has preserved in a rather disjointed way the fundamental ideas of the apostolic period with a few crucial deviations. Seeberg summarizes the New Testament ideas preserved in Barnabas as follows: (1) the pre-existence of Christ and his participation in the creation; (2) the incarnation of the Son of God and his suffering upon the cross according to the will of God; (3) the believer's possession of the blessings of redemption through baptism; (4) the baptized and forgiven sinner's endeavor to fulfill the "new law" of the Lord Jesus Christ; (5) Christ's coming

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[82] Bainton, p. 20.

[83] Ibid.

[84] McGiffert, p. 94.

to judgment at the end of the world.[85]

The notion that the Hebrew Bible is filled with types and prophecies of Christ has, for the most part, been ignored in this chapter. However, Barnabas' attitude toward the Jews and his attitude toward the Old Testament will be considered next.

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[85]Reinhold Seeberg, Text-Book of the History of Doctrines (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1954), I, 70-73.

CHAPTER V

THE MEANING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the previous chapter it was observed how Barnabas sets the economy of salvation against the background of the Old Testament narratives, particularly the events connected with the Exodus. He also uses an abundance of Old Testament types and metaphors to describe the work of Jesus Christ. Questions concerning Barnabas' use of the Old Testament, therefore, naturally arise. What is the meaning and the significance of the Old Testament for Barnabas? What principles does he follow in determining its meaning? What relationship does he see between Judaism and Christianity? The answers to these questions will reveal certain unique ideas of history in the epistle of Barnabas. The author's estimate of Judaism and his interpretation of Old Testament history demonstrate how at least one early Christian viewed the past.

The relationship between Judaism and Christianity was basic to Barnabas' interpretation of the Old Testament. Some years earlier the apostle Paul had already defined that relationship; in fact, had recast the old doctrine of the remnant in terms of the olive-tree simile. In his letter to the Romans Paul explained that the faithfulness of the patriarchs assured the Israelites of God's promises.[1] However, because of unbelief the Israelites were broken off in disgrace

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[1]Rom. 11.

from the olive-tree of God's promises. Now, by the mysterious "contrary to nature" operation of God, the Christian wild olive branches have been grafted into the cultivated olive-tree to receive the blessings promised to Abraham and to his seed forever. Precisely this line of thought is worked out "with great polemic vigour" in the epistle of Barnabas.[2] The prophecies and the history of the Old Testament are "mere figures or outlines which acquire their true meaning only when they are realized and fulfilled in the Church of Christ."[3]

Barnabas believed that the Old Testament was never intended to be understood in a literal sense. He therefore robbed the actual history of the Old Testament of its validity as history. The true meaning of its facts is to be found in Jesus Christ and in the new life to which he calls his disciples.[4]

In view of this, Foakes-Jackson comments that the epistle of Barnabas is a striking example of what the apostolic teaching concerning the old covenant was not. He claims that Barnabas is ignorant with regard to God's progressive self-revelation in his dealings with mankind, unjust in his treatment of Jewish ceremonial practices and beliefs as mere errors, and unfair in making "the Old Testament no

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[2]R. L. P. Milburn, Early Christian Interpretations of History (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1954), p. 24.

[3]Ibid.

[4]William Smith and Henry Wace, editors, A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines (London: John Murray, 1877), p. 264.

more than a fantastic forestatement of the New Testament."[5] Seeberg, too, expresses his disappointment in Barnabas' attitude toward the Old Testament and says that Barnabas does not recognize the historical relation of Israel to Christianity in the development of the plan of salvation.[6] Farrar is more critical of Barnabas when he remarks about the epistle's obvious inferiority to the Pauline epistles and claims that it "leads to decadent doctrine and incipient heresy."[7] Danielou argues that Barnabas did not possess the necessary intellectual equipment to explain how something good could cease being good.[8] Others point the view that Barnabas' attitude toward the Old Testament should be interpreted as a vigorous way of explaining that the law was not as important as the Jews thought.[9]

Whatever the case, for Barnabas Christianity is the all-sufficient institution of salvation. It is foolish and sinful to assert that the old covenant may still have a binding influence upon Christians. Old things have passed away and all things are become new. Those who live

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[5]J. Frederick Foakes-Jackson, The History of the Christian Church From the Earliest Times to A.D. 461 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1914), p. 100.

[6]Reinhold Seeberg, Text-Book of the History of Doctrines (Grand Rapids, Mich." Baker Book House, 1954), I, 72.

[7]F. W. Farrar, The Early Days of Christianity (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1882), p. 58.

[8]Jean Danielou, "The Conception of History in the Christian Tradition," The Journal of Religion, XXX (1950), 174.

[9]Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, editors, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1948), VI, 33-34.

under the new covenant ought to pursue the higher kind of knowledge that marks the difference between the old and the new covenants. Barnabas' frequent references to the ordinances (δικαώματα) of God are related to this new and higher kind of knowledge. By the ordinances of God he means God's purpose which runs through the past and leads to the present. The real deeper meaning of the past has been brought to light in Jesus Christ. This is the γνῶσις he has to offer his readers.[10]

L. W. Barnard suggests that Barnabas uses γνῶσις in three different senses. He says that in the epistle γνῶσις: (1) is associated with faith and has ethical consequences; (2) sometimes refers to the interpretation of past, present, and eschatological future events; (3) is mediated through the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament.[11] The first two senses have been discussed in previous chapters. The third sense belongs to the present discussion.

Before considering Barnabas' use of the allegorical method to determine the message of the Old Testament it may be of some value to know what sections of the Old Testament particularly occupy his attention. In this connection, it should be kept in mind that "a disjointed medley of moral sayings" makes up the major part of this

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[10]J. Armitage Robinson, Barnabas, Hermas and the Didache (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1920), p. 6.

[11]L. W. Barnard, "The Epistle of Barnabas and the Deal Sea Scrolls: Some Observations," Scottish Journal of Theology, XIII (1960), 50. The references from the epistle of Barnabas are respectively: (1) 1:5; 5:4; 18:1 (2) 2:3-4 (3) 6:9; 13:7.

epistle.[12] This might be expected of one "whose mind is full of the warnings of the ancient prophets and of the sapiential literature of the Old Testament."[13]

It is interesting that only one Old Testament book is mentioned by name in the epistle. In his allegorization of the Old Testament food laws he cites by name the book of Deuteronomy.[14] Elsewhere he refers to the "ten words" (ἐν τοῖς Δέκα λόγοις) which God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai[15] and to the "beginning of the creation" (ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς κτίσεως).[16] Most of his quotes are taken from the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the prophets. The Psalms and the prophecies of Isaiah seem to be his favorites. It has already been noted that he cites the book of Daniel as well as some apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works.[17]

The sitz im leben of the epistle is also helpful for an understanding of the author's recourse to the allegorical method. The assumption of this study is that the epistle of Barnabas belongs to the time of Hadrian. By this time the break between Judaism and

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[12] Robinson, p. 13.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Barn. 10:2.

[15] Barn. 15:1.

[16] Barn. 15:3.

[17] James Muilenburg, The Literaty Relations of the Epistle of Barnabas and the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Marburg, Germany, 1929), pp. 87-89.

Christianity would have been fairly complete. L. W. Barnard refers to a Jewish source of the first century which says: "For the excommunicate let there be no hope and the arrogant government do thou swiftly uproot in our days; and may the Christians and heretics suddenly be laid low and not be inscribed with the righteous."[18] Barnard adds that the Christians could no longer attend synagogues by A.D. 100 when letters were sent from Palestine to all synagogues of the Diaspora asking that Christians be excluded from their assemblies.[19]

Emperor Hadrian, in contrast to his predecessor, adopted a lenient policy toward the Jews. As was mentioned earlier this policy set off a new wave of nationalism among the Jews and heightened their hopes for the rebuilding of the Temple. The Jews probably took the opportunity to propagandize their renewed hopes among the fertile hearts and minds of Jewish Christians. In spite of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 the Jews would not acknowledge that God's solemn covenant with the chosen people had been rendered null and void.[20] Much to their surprise and horror, however, Hadrian did not rebuild the Temple as they expected but erected on the site a shrine to the god Jupiter. Pfleiderer says that this act set off the second Jewish war in

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[18] L. W. Barnard, "Saint Stephen and Early Alexandrian Christianity," New Testament Studies, VII (1960, 1961), 35. This source is known as Birkath-ha-Minim and appears in The Origins of the Gospel According to Saint Matthew by Kilpatrick.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Quasten and Plumpe, pp. 31-32.

A.D. 132.[21] Assuming that Barnabas lived at this time, his harsh attitude toward the Jews can then be understood. The insurrectionists were hated by the populace for again disrupting the stability of the empire and encouraging suspicion on the part of the Roman authorities concerning those groups associated with the Jews. This situation would involve Christianity even though its theoretical break with Judaism had already been accomplished. Thus Barnabas is at pains to accentuate the differences between Christianity and Judaism.

From the historian's point of view it is interesting to see how certain early churchmen responded to the call of these times. When the attack threatened, Barnabas scented the danger and sounded the alarm.[22] To accomplish his purposes he chose a method which is distasteful to many in the scientific age. Nevertheless the method he chose, allegory, "stresses the needful lesson that, in observing outward rites and ceremonies, it is the spirit that vivifies."[23]

There is no allusion to persecution of any kind in the epistle of Barnabas although the curtailment of Jewish programs by the Roman authorities may have also included the Christians. The intent of the epistle, therefore, is to explain God's purpose for His "new people" lest they give way to immoral conduct, neglect of Christian fellowship,

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[21] Otto Pfleiderer, Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in Their Historical Connections (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), IV, 320-321.

[22] Quasten and Plumpe, pp. 34-35.

[23] Ibid.

and selfish disregard for the less fortunate.[24] At the same time the epistle disavows Judaism as an error because this religion proved itself nothing but a failure. The Jews, however, were not entirely responsible for the failure of their religion. If they were deceived, it was by an outside, perhaps even alien power. The Jews "erred because an evil angel (ἄγγελος πονηρός) was misleading them."[25]

By acquiescing to the "evil angel" the Jewish people were judged unworthy to receive the divine covenant.[26] The promise of the inheritance was not given to the Jewish people at all but to the Christian Church. Barnabas demonstrates this by recourse to patriarchal history where the younger son frequently secured the blessing instead of the elder.[27] However, in the case of Ephraim and Manasses, the latter, representing the chosen people, was also called "blessed." This indicated, according to Barnabas, that he would not lose the covenant forever.[28] A remnant of the Jewish race would be saved at the end of time.[29] Thus Barnabas is not anti-Semitic in an extreme sense. His

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[24]Robinson, p. 24.

[25]Barn. 9:4. Robert M. Grant, "'Development' in Early Christian Doctrine," Anglican Theological Review, XXVII (1945), 125-126, calls attention to the writings of Posidonius and Philo of Byblos who claimed "that ancient religious traditions have been interpolated by wicked priests."

[26]Barn. 14:4.

[27]Barn. 13:5.

[28]Quasten and Plumpe, p. 178.

[29]Cf. Rom. 11:25-27.

harsh attitude toward the Jews was not racial, but theological.[30]

According to Barnabas the covenant and the Old Testament are not the property of the Jews and the Christians. They belong to the Christians alone. Barnabas could scarcely be more blunt than when he says: "be not made like unto some, heaping up your sins and saying that the covenant is both theirs and ours. It is ours."[31] Therefore the Old Testament was considered an entirely Christian book consisting of theological ideas and explanations necessary for the present.[32]

As Philo had interpreted the Old Testament in the interest of philosophy, Barnabas interprets it in the interest of Christianity.[33] What furnishes Barnabas with the profound and the proper understanding of the Old Testament is γνῶσις. Harnack remarks that the plain words of Jesus did not sufficiently satisfy the early Christian's craving for knowledge. Since the Old Testament sayings and histories were the words of God and yet were in part unintelligible or perhaps even offensive, it was natural to reinterpret them in terms of current exigencies.[34]

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[30]Quasten and Plumpe, p. 174-175.

[31]Barn. 4:6-7. Cf. Quasten and Plumpe, p. 170: "Ours in the sense in which a type is merged in the reality; not in the sense that a type is still valid after the reality has appeared."

[32]Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910), I, 175.

[33]Seeberg, p. 72.

[34]Harnack, pp. 175-176.

Barnabas felt that the Old Testament was really a concealment of the New Testament. The Old Testament could have meaning only if it were understood in terms of the Gospel. This theme was not necessarily new, but the method of carrying it through was somewhat unique.[35] The author's fondness for the allegorical method of interpreting the Scripture may have been inherited from Alexandrian Hellenistic Judaism which reached its peak in the writings of Philo.[36] This is not to imply, however, that Barnabas' method was directly inherited from Philo. R. P. C. Hanson has convincingly argued that the epistle "shows no sign of influence from Philo whatever."[37] The allegorizations in Barnabas "are either borrowed directly from or modelled upon the allegory of Pseudo-Aristeas."[38]

L. W. Barnard finds a striking parallel to Barnabas' exegetical method in the pesher of the Dead Sea Scrolls.[39] Pesher has been defined as "an interpretation which passes the power of ordinary wisdom to attain; it is given by divine illumination."[40] This same line of

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[35]Robert M. Grant, The Bible in the Church: A Short History of Interpretation (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 46.

[36]L. W. Barnard, "The Problem of the Epistle of Barnabas," The Church Quarterly Review, CLIX (1958), 211.

[37]R. P. C. Hanson, Allegory and Event (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1959), p. 99.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Barnard, "The Epistle of Barnabas and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Some Observations," Scottish Journal of Theology, pp. 46-47.

[40]F. F. Bruce, Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts (London: The Tyndale Press, 1959), p. 8.

approach is taken by Barnabas in his attempt to lay bare the inner, spiritual meaning of the Old Testament. For pesher Barnabas would substitute gnosis.

The error of the Jews was their failure to interpret the Scripture Christologically. Thus Meinhold: "Die Juden können die Schrift nicht verstehen, weil sie nicht auf die aus der Schrift redende Stimme des Herrn hören, d.h. weil sie die Schrift nicht christologisch, sondern wörtlich verstehen."[41] The literal interpretation of the Old Testament was misleading in that it produced ideas which were not necessarily Christian. Christian exegesis is always Christocentric. Everything in the Old Testament must either point to Christ or speak of Christ. Some exegetical ingenuity obviously had to be exercised in order to find Christ on every page of the Old Testament. This was the line of thought that prevailed not only during Barnabas' times but to the time of the protestant Reformation. Thus Seeberg comments that the allegorical method "prevented for 1500 years a historical interpretation of the Old Testament."[42]

Barnabas does not use the term "allegory" in describing his exegtical method. Rather he calls his method γνῶσις. This fact has lead Meinhold to suggest that Barnabas' method ought to be described

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[41]Peter Meinhold, "Geschichte und Exegese im Barnabasbrief," Zeitschrift Für Kirchengeschichte, LIX (1940), 263.

[42]Seeberg, p. 72.

as "pneumatic" exegesis with allegory as a by-product.[43] It should be noted, however, that while "allegory" is not used by the author the term τύπος appears with considerable frequency as, for example, the reference to the sacrifice of Isaac as a "type" of Christ's sacrifice.[44]

This, then raises the question whether Barnabas employs typology or allegory in his pneumatic or "gnostic" interpretation of the Old Testament. Hanson has defined typology as "the interpreting of any event belonging to the present or the recent past as the fulfillment of a similar situation recorded or prophesied in Scripture." Allegory, on the other hand, is "the interpretation of an object or person . . . as in reality meaning some object or person of a later time, with no attempt made to trace a relationship of 'similar situation' between them."[45] Based on these definitions, it would seem that Barnabas leans more toward the allegorical method. Wolfson mentions the epistle's identification of the two goats upon which Aaron cast lots and the sacrificed heifer with Jesus as indications that Barnabas uses "type" as equivalent to "allegory."[46]

It is not within the scope of this study to consider in detail each passage which Barnabas subjects to the allegorical method. The

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[43]Meinhold, p. 260.

[44]Barn. 7:3.

[45]Hanson, p. 7.

[46]Harry A. Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Church Fathers (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 44. Cf. Barn. 7:6-10; 8:1-2.

literal sense of all the ceremonial precepts of the Old Testament is denied. The law is entirely spiritual. A clear illustration of this is Barnabas' use of the Old Testament dietary laws which, he says, were not concerned with animals at all but with men symbolized by the animals. Thus the swine means men who forget the Lord when they have plenty and cry out to him only when they are in need. The eagle, the hawk, and the vulture are people who "do not know how to gain their food by their labour and sweat, but plunder other people's property in their iniquity." Three kinds of fish, the lamprey, the polypus, and the cuttlefish, symbolize men who are "utterly ungodly and who are already condemned to death, just as these fish alone are accursed, and float in the deep water, not swimming like the others but living on the ground at the bottom of the sea." The hare means a "corrupter of boys" or one given to sensual behavior. The hyena is symbolic of unrestrained passion because this animal changes its sex year by year. The weasel represents men and women who are iniquitous with their mouths. Barnabas adds that the weasel conceives through the mouth. "Cloven hoofed and ruminant" animals may be eaten because they symbolize the righteous man who "both walks in this world and looks forward to the holy age" and those "who ruminate on the word of the Lord." Concluding this section of the epistle, Barnabas underscores the superiority of the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament to the literalism of the Jews:

> But how was it possible for them to understand or comprehend these things? But we having a righteous understanding of them announce the commandments as the Lord wishes. For

this cause he circumcised our hearing and our hearts
that we should comprehend these things.[47]

A very interesting and frequently cited passage is Barnabas' allegorization of Abraham's circumcision.[48] In order to maintain the "christocentrism" of the Old Testament, Barnabas sets out to prove that for Abraham circumcision was not merely a matter of the flesh. In fact, "Abraham, who first circumcised, did so looking forward in the spirit to Jesus, and had received the doctrine of the three letters." The "doctrine of the three letters" consisted of a combination of passages from Genesis[49] by means of which it was assumed that three hundred and eighteen men of Abraham's household were circumcized. To his own great satisfaction Barnabas then says that ten (I), eight (H) and three hundred (T) signify Jesus (IH) and the cross (T). Robert Grant refers to this passage as illustrative of "the eccentricity of his (Barnabas') exegesis" which in no way increases our respect for his intelligence.[50] The ridiculousness of the author's effort has also been pointed out in that Barnabas obviously forgot that the Lord did not speak Greek to Abraham.[51]

It would appear from the present discussion that Barnabas' use of

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[47]Barn. 10:1-12.

[48]Barn. 9:7-9.

[49]Gen. 17:23-27; 14:14.

[50]Grant, The Bible in the Church: A Short History of Interpretation, p. 46.

[51]Quasten and Plumpe, p. 176.

allegory discredits him completely. Such, however, is not necessarily the case. Grant has stated that the allegorizer's greatest strength lies in his insistence that God speaks through the writings of the Old Testament prophets. God's revelation was not given simply in events but also through the instrumentality of the prophets themselves. His revelation has meaning not only in the past but in the present too. If God gave His revelation to man in the past, then this revelation contained hidden meanings which could be understood by men of later times. History also contained hidden meanings. It was "an imperfect representation of eternal truth;" for when compared with the timelessness of God, "temporal events could only be shadows of heavenly images." In the final analysis events themselves were only "symbols of eternal truth."[52]

Admittedly the allegorical method is wholly subjective. As Cruttwell has explained, it "relies upon a supposed ethical sense underlying the literal, not as a secondary or metaphorical application of it, but as the only true reality, to which the outward expression is a mere glass-case."[53] Thus the historical perspective of the Old Testament is destroyed by allegory.

By employing the allegorical method Barnabas perverts the historical sense of the Old Testament. He imposes his own presuppositions on the

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[52]Robert M. Grant, The Letter and the Spirit (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), pp. 105-107.

[53]Charles T. Cruttwell, A Literary History of Early Christianity (London: Charles Griffin and Co., Ltd., 1893), I, 53.

Old Testament and makes it say what he thought Christianity was saying or what it should be saying. In this way he produced, among other things, a relatively accurate account of the apostolic kerygma. Elsewhere, however, he reverts to moralism. While his method of interpretation cannot be justified, Barnabas nevertheless presented some of the essentials of the apostolic kerygma in his epistle. This latter may indicate the value the epistle had for its times and explain why it was read aloud to assemblies of Christians in some corners of the Roman Empire. Barnabas was a Christian, although lacking in his appreciation of the full apostolic witness.

In view of the above, it is particularly interesting that there are a number of coincidences between the epistle of Barnabas and Stephen's speech in the book of Acts. A recent study attempted to prove that Barnabas, almost alone among the Christian writers of the early second century, was directly influenced by Stephen's views.[54]

Hanson says that the most interesting coincidence between Barnabas and Stephen is the allegorization of the land as a forecast of Christ.[55] Barnabas cites a passage from Exodus[56] regarding God's command to enter into the good land which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "The good land" is then allegorized by Barnabas to mean Christ in the

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[54]Barnard, "Saint Stephen and Early Alexandrian Christianity," N. T. Studies, pp. 31-45.

[55]Hanson, p. 98.

[56]Ex. 33:1,3.

flesh: "Hope, it says, on that Jesus who will be manifested to you in the flesh."[57] Stephen's speech may reflect a similar point of view when, in a matter of three verses, the word "land" occurs four times.[58]

Other similarities between Stephen and Barnabas include:[59] (1) the Temple as prefiguring the Christian Church or the Messiah;[60] (2) the account of Moses on Mt. Sinai, the giving of the Law, and the apostasy of the Jews;[61] (3) attentiveness to sacrificial worship in Israel;[62] (4) the use of the term "Righteous One" (ὁ δίκαιος) by Barnabas in comparison with Stephen's polemic against the golden calf and the Temple;[63] (5) Joseph, Moses, and Joshua are used by Stephen as possible types of Christ's sufferings while Barnabas uses only Moses and Joshua.[64]

This impressive list of similarities, however, does not mean that Barnabas and Stephen agree on all points. In spite of their similarities, Stephen ultimately diverges from Barnabas, the latter probably being closer to the epistle to the Hebrews than to Stephen.

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[57]Barn. 6:8; cf. 11:8.

[58]Acts 7:3-5.

[59]Cf. Barnard, "Saint Stephen and Early Alexandrian Christianity," N. T. Studies, p. 38.

[60]Barn. 12:8; cf. Acts 7:44.

[61]Barn. 4:7-8; cf. Acts 7:38-42.

[62]Barn. 2:4-8; cf. Acts 7:41-43.

[63]Barn. 6:7; cf. Acts 7:39-50.

[64]Barn. 12:1-11; 4:7-8; cf. Acts 7:9-50.

One would normally suppose that the epistle to the Hebrews and the epistle of Barnabas derive from similar backgrounds since their purposes are so nearly identical. Hanson claims justification for classifying Hebrews, Stephen's speech, and Barnabas together as products of Alexandrian Christianity.[65] Like Barnabas the author of Hebrews addresses himself to Jewish Christian readers who, under the pressure of some great crisis, were looking back wistfully to the religion of their fathers. The author therefore brings forward an impassioned warning against apostasy.

The above is about as far as the similarity between Barnabas and Hebrews can be carried. On a number of fundamental issues the two epistles stand apart from each other. For example, Hebrews attempts to demonstrate the inferiority of Judaism to Christianity by exhibiting the former as an imperfect preliminary stage of the perfect religion of Christianity. Barnabas, on the other hand, is not willing to concede even that much to Judaism. For him Judaism is a perverse caricature of the truth and nothing more.[66] Nevertheless both Hebrews and Barnabas are unwilling to cast the Old Testament aside. It remains for both an authority on which they seek to base their teaching. Hebrews admits the temporary historical validity of the Old Testament institutions. But Barnabas is so thorough in his Christianization of the Old Testament that the historical realities therein are denied in favor

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[65]Hanson, p. 99.

[66]Barn. 9:4; 10:9; 16:2.

of their spiritual significance.

Pfleiderer has remarked that Barnabas' attitude toward Judaism and the Old Testament was one step short of a heretical gnosticism.[67] While Barnabas opposes the teachings of gnosticism, his epistle may have ironically been composed under the influence of gnostic teachings on the Old Testament.[68] Gnostic tendencies made a rather early entry into the Church and such heresiarchs as Basilides and Valentinus were not at first considered outside the limits of orthodox Christianity. A fairly common feature of all gnostic systems was the depreciation of the Jewish God and of the Old Testament. Judaism and the Old Testament were felt to be the work of another inferior God. From the discussion of Barnabas' attitude toward Judaism and the Old Testament above, it seems that he was on the verge of agreeing with the gnostics. He was at all costs an uncompromising antagonist of Judaism.

Marcion was also concerned about the relationship of Judaism to Christianity. He attempted to answer the problem by discarding the Old Testament religion from beginning to end. A less than the Highest Being, called the Demiurge, created the material world. He was the God of the Old Testament who deceived the Jews until the God of the New Testament sent forth His Son to bring them out of darkness. The only conclusion to be drawn from such teachings was the utter uselessness of the Old

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[67] Pfleiderer, pp. 317-320. Cf. also Hans Windisch, Der Barnabasbrief (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1920), p. 395.

[68] Barnard, "The Problem of the Epistle of Barnabas," The Church Quarterly Review, p. 215.

Testament. It should be cast aside altogether and only the epistles of Paul and the Pauline Gospel of St. Luke retained of the New Testament.[69] Marcion attempted to create a meaningful Christianity by cleaning it of any and all Jewish elements.[70]

Barnabas came to the threshold of the error of Marcion and of gnosticism in general. However, to his credit is the fact that he never crossed the threshold. Thus Pfleiderer can say that "in his rejection of Judaism and his Christianisation of the Old Testament, he retains essentially the standpoint of the Church as a whole."[71] Barnabas himself is convinced that he has reproduced the essence of Church tradition. He says: "So far as possibility and simplicity allow an explanation to be given to you my soul hopes that none of the things which are necessary for salvation have been omitted, according to my desire."[72] A complete rejection of the outward form of Judaism was deemed necessary by Barnabas in presenting the elements of salvation. But in spite of his severe denunciation of Judaism, Barnabas has taken over the whole of Judaism's inner form into Christianity.[73]

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[69]Cf. Robinson, pp. 2-3.

[70]Robert M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 128.

[71]Pfleiderer, p. 319.

[72]Barn. 17:1.

[73]Thomas F. Torrance, The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 107.

On the basis of the present discussion another problem is brought into focus. Does Barnabas' use of allegory mean that the whole history of Israel was really not history at all? In a recent article Alexander maintained along with Grant that there is no allegory in the New Testament--in fact, even that which seems to be allegory is really typology. He then adds that "while the Apostolic Fathers are on the whole more wildly fanciful than the New Testament writers, they follow the New Testament exegetical pattern and remain, like St. Paul, Christocentric and just to the historical sense."[74] It is then possible to say, in view of Barnabas' rejection of the historical character of the Old Testament religion, that he is in some way "just to the historical sense?"

Hanson's definition of typology as a method which takes history seriously has already been considered above. Typological exegesis looked at history as the scene upon which God's plan could be discerned in sacred history, the earlier stages being preliminary sketches of the latter.[75] Allegorical exegesis, on the other hand, treated the text of Scripture as merely symbolic of spiritual truth. The hidden or concealed meaning within the symbol was all important. Barnabas' epistle is really a mixture of typology and allegory. The latter, as was mentioned earlier, certainly seems to be predominant. Barnabas'

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[74]James Alexander, "The Interpretation of Scripture in the Ante-Nicene Period," Interpretation (July 1958), 273.

[75]J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1960), p. 71.

interpretation of the dietary laws of the Old Testament or Abraham's circumcision can only be classified as examples of allegory. However, in other instances the author seems more inclined toward a typological exegesis which retains the original historical sense of Scripture. Of the list of types which appear most frequently in patristic exegesis[76] the following are found in Barnabas: Adam, Moses, the law-giver, as foreshadowing Christ in a real sense,[77] and the sacrifices of the old covenant, especially the sacrifice of Isaac, as an anticipation of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary.[78] Barnabas' references to the Exodus may be added to this list. Broadly speaking he interprets the events of the Exodus as types of that deliverance which came in the person of Jesus Christ. Beyond these there is scarcely anything which might pass as typology. For the most part Barnabas is very much anti-historical in his approach to the Old Testament. One must ultimately say with Grant that his excessive use of allegory has led him to the "rejection not only of Old Testament history but also of the general Christian understanding of the meaning of that history."[79]

One additional question should be asked of the epistle of Barnabas. This question is prompted by Milburn's discussion of the didactic quality

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[76] Ibid., p. 72.

[77] Barn., passim. Cf. 6:9.

[78] Cf. Barn. 7:3.

[79] Grant, The Bible in the Church: A Short History of Interpretation, p. 46.

of history.[80] Does the epistle of Barnabas see any educative value in the history of the Old Testament? The answer may be given in the affirmative on three accounts. First, of the few Old Testament characters who appear on the pages of the epistle, Abraham more than the others seems to be cited as an example to follow. The allusions to his faithfulness encourage a similar type of response in the readers of the epistle.[81] Second, the whole history of the Jews has educative value although from a negative side. The frequent citations of the Jewish unfaithfulness and misapprehension of God's covenant serve as warnings for the readers against participating in a similar error. Finally, Abraham, Moses, Jacob and the prophets all possessed a pneumatic understanding of God's revelation. Their perception of the real meaning of that revelation ought to incite the readers to seek γνῶσις and to accept that γνῶσις which Barnabas now imparts to them. History, therefore, is, in one sense, "a collection of examples which awaken in men the realization of right and wrong, and thus lead to improvement through knowledge."[82]

From what has been said earlier it should be evident that the meaning of the Old Testament for Barnabas is eschatological in character. The author is interested in the past only because it contains hidden meanings for the present and for the future. The most celebrated example

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[80] Milburn, pp. 28-30.

[81] Barn. 13:7.

[82] Milburn, p. 29.

of this eschatological concern with the Old Testament has been discussed in the initial chapter of the thesis. The very first chapters of the Hebrew Bible occasion Barnabas' soliloquy on the millennium. The start of the Old Testament already contains the secret of how God's purposes will ultimately be realized. This is sufficient to indicate once again the inclusive eschatological cast of the epistle. No matter what part of Scripture is brought under his scrutiny, all has meaning because the end of all things is known to the author. His futurist eschatology shapes and controls his ideas on universal history.

It is difficult to estimate the value of Barnabas' attitude toward Judaism and the Old Testament. A number of points, at any rate, ought to be kept in mind. The anti-Jewish polemic of Barnabas does not testify to the deep thought of the early Church. It does testify to the danger that Judaism constituted for the Church and its reaction to that danger.[83] Secondly, by means of an allegorical-typological exegesis the author has arrived at conclusions that are, in some instances, sound and spiritual. This cannot be denied. What might be questioned, however, is the particular method employed to reach these conclusions.[84] Combining these points it can be said, in addition, that while Barnabas' attitude toward Judaism is uncompromising, the same attitude is not carried over to the Old Testament. If it had been,

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[83]Jules Lebreton and Jacques Zeiller, The Emergence of the Church in the Roman World (New York: Collier Books, 1942), p. 140.

[84]B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A.D. 461 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), p. 160.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The epistle of Barnabas should not be read as a treatise on the meaning of history. Meaning in history is not its major thrust. The author is writing in a time of crisis when Egyptian Christians under his pastoral care were in danger of relapsing into the errors of Judaism. He warns against such a relapse and in this shows a similarity of purpose with the epistle to the Hebrews. Both Barnabas and Hebrews want to show that the New Testament is concealed in the Old, a fact which has come to light especially in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Hebrews is concerned with the difference between "the shadow and the substance, and leads us up to the great idea of progress, of a revelation which, though divine in all its stages, is always reaching forward to its final consummation in Christ."[1] Barnabas, on the other hand, displays a marked inferiority to Hebrews in failing to grasp the distinction between the shadow and the substance or between the type and the antitype. He is more interested in playing with words, letters, and numbers while also dabbling in obscure rabbinical traditions.[2]

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[1]Charles Bigg, The Origins of Christianity (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 57.

[2]Ibid. J. Armitage Robinson, Barnabas, Hermas and the Didache (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1920), p. 23, says that Barnabas probably read Hebrews. But if so, "he found it too difficult, too remote in its own lofty gnosis: a few of its phrases abide in his memory, but he has no use for its high argument."

The above, however, does not dismiss the importance of Barnabas. While Bigg prefers to call him "simple Barnabas"[3] and while the epistle fails to develop a solid systematic view of history, nevertheless certain ideas on the meaning of history shine through with considerable clarity. Even Bigg, who is rather harsh in his treatment of "simple Barnabas," is forced to conclude that the writing is of great value if, for no other reason, as a witness to the beliefs of its times.[4] Thus also Barnard:

> In any event the Epistle of Barnabas is one of the earliest certain witnesses to Christianity in Egypt and any information it can provide is of no small importance to the student of early Christian history and doctrine.[5]

Permeating the entire epistle and determining to a large extent its ideas on the meaning of history is the eschatological anticipation of the kingdom of God. History is not a regular recurrence of events. Its pattern is not the cyclical pattern of the Greek idea. But history is a belief in a continuous linear movement toward the millennial kingdom. Through His chosen instruments God has revealed the things of the past, the present, and the future.[6] God has made known through His revelation in the Old and the New Testaments that the world is moving toward the consummation of all things. The Christian, however, must look beneath the literal meaning of scripture

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[3] Bigg, p. 57.

[4] Ibid.

[5] L. W. Barnard, "A Note on Barnabas 6, 8-17," Studia Patristica, IV (1961), 263.

[6] Barn. 1:7; 4:1,6; 5:3; 17:2. Cf. also I Clement 31:1; 45:2.

to determine history's course and meaning. He must seek after gnosis, the deeper meaning of scripture which unlocks for him the door to the future. Through myths and parables God has communicated to His faithful people the knowledge of the end-times. When the Christian, therefore, possesses this spirit gnosis he will understand that whatever has occurred in the past and whatever occurs in the present or the future must be interpreted in the light of the eschatological seventh and eighth days.

From the preceding paragraph it would seem that Barnabas' view of history is fairly consistent with the biblical view. Dawson defines the biblical view as an essentially unitary concept.[7] There is a beginning, a center, and an end to history. He then adds:

> This beginning, this centre, and this end transcend history; they are not historical events in the ordinary sense of the word, but acts of divine creation to which the whole process of history is subordinate. For the Christian view of history is a vision of history sub specie aeternitatis, an interpretation of time in terms of eternity and of human events in the light of divine revelation. And thus Christian history is inevitably apocalyptic, and the apocalypse is the Christian substitute for the secular philosophies of history.[8]

That Barnabas' ideas of history are essentially apocalyptic in Dawson's sense we have attempted to show throughout this study. However, Dawson's explanation of the Christian concept of history poses a rather important question. Is Barnabas' view of history really consistent with the

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[7]Christopher Dawson, The Dynamics of World History (New York: Mentor Omega Books, 1962), p. 234.

[8]Ibid.

biblical view? For the most part we would have to agree with Seeberg that Barnabas "preserves the fundamental ideas of the apostolic period in a relatively pure form."[9] The broad outlines of Barnabas' view agree with the biblical view of history. However, at two points especially Barnabas separates himself from the biblical view.

First, while he agrees with the doctrine of creation in Genesis he then proceeds to disagree with the historical account of God's acts in behalf of the Old Testament people. Because of his anti-Jewish bias, he fails to regard the Old Testament in terms of preparation or promise. To Barnabas the Old Testament is the New Testament in parable. He would admit the historic reality of Old Testament personalities. But the history of the Old Testament has no value except as a veil under which is hidden the person of Jesus. Barnabas retains the creation account at the beginning of the Old Testament, but is content to virtually skip over its subsequent history to the incarnation of Christ.

Second, Barnabas separates himself from the biblical witness in the matter of the millennium. Here he ironically finds himself more at home in the Judaism he is attacking than in the Christianity he is defending. Jewish apocalyptists were inclined to be millennialists. Barnabas' overwhelming preoccupation with the end-times necessitates that he provide some schema for the last times. But what he provides

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[9]Reinhold Seeberg, Text-Book of the History of Doctrines (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1954), I, 70.

is a materialistic concept of the kingdom of God. This may be regarded as somewhat inconsistent not only with the biblical view but also with the rest of his epistle. He champions a spiritual gnosis, but then combines this with a highly materialistic view of the eschaton.

Barnabas' ideas of history, then, vary from the biblical ideas at a number of crucial points. Otherwise, as was demonstrated in chapter four, he conforms himself to the idea of an economy of salvation or a heilsgeschichte as interpretive of all history. As Dawson says, there is first "a sacred history in the strict sense . . . the story of God's dealings with his people and the fulfillment of his eternal purpose in and through them."[10] After this "there is the interpretation of external history in the light of this central purpose."[11] Barnabas abbreviates his sacred history when he allegorizes the Old Testament. Nevertheless, as Löwith says relative to the early Fathers in general, he has "developed from Hebrew prophecy and Christian eschatology a theology of history focused on the supra-historical events of creation, incarnation, and consummation."[12] And through this theology of history he is disposed to interpret and to find meaning in the events of external history. The pattern of events is not seen in terms of cause and effect, but in terms of God's intervention in time and in history. Or, to borrow Milburn's words,

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[10]Dawson, p. 235.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Karl Löwith, Meaning in History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 19.

the pattern of events is to be seen in "the intimate and incalculable pressure of the Spirit of God."[13]

Barnabas' theology of history, however, is uneven in its emphases. The creation and the incarnation may be noteworthy incidents of God's intervention in time, but in the final analysis it is the eschaton that is most important. And to know the end is a matter of prophetic insight, so much so that one is inclined to suggest that the charismatic tradition of the Old Testament is perpetuated in Barnabas. At any rate, he seems to regard himself as specially endowed with the Spirit of God, as a prophet, or as a second century charismatic. He knows the end because he has been blessed with a spiritual kind of gnosis. This is Barnabas' pride and joy.

But it is precisely at this point that he begins to deviate not so much from the biblical view of history as from the biblical view of man's redemption. For Barnabas it is most important to know the end of history because of the moral implications such knowledge has for the present. To know the end of history, he believed, would result in a radical moral transformation in man's conduct. Man would begin to follow the way of light and to flee the way of darkness. Only if man lived according to the divine precepts could he hope to enjoy the bliss of those seventh and eighth days. Thus, while knowing the form of the apostolic teaching, he misunderstood it. For Barnabas apostolic teaching is "a kind of superstructure on a foundation of

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[13]R. L. P. Milburn, Early Christian Interpretations of History (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1954), p. 25.

Jewish ethic."[14] This fact is what compels Cullmann, for example, to say that Barnabas and other early Fathers:

> Are at a considerable distance from New Testament thought, and to a considerable extent relapse into a moralism which ignores the notion of grace, and of the redemptive death of Christ, so central to apostolic theology.[15]

The uneven emphases in Barnabas' theology of history might also be explained by an interesting little article in which den Boer attempts to distinguish between early Christian and pagan concepts of history. He lists three points in particular which demonstrate the uniqueness of early Christian ideas on history: (1) history is not circular; it does not repeat itself; (2) history is truly universal; (3) the interest of early Christianity shifts from an original orientation toward the end of all things to the present situation and even to the past.[16] If den Boer is correct in his analysis and if his three points are descriptive of the progression of historical thinking, then the epistle of Barnabas stands toward the end of that progression--but not at the very end. For the epistle is oriented toward the end-time and is not, according to later developments, equally oriented toward the present and the past.

Once again, then, Barnabas' theology of history is uneven because

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[14] Hans Lietzmann, A History of the Early Church (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1961), I, 217-218.

[15] Oscar Cullmann, The Early Church (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 96.

[16] W. den Boer, "Some Remarks on the Beginnings of Christian Historiography," Studia Patristica, IV (1961), 361.

of his preoccupation with eschatology. Such an unevenness, however, may have been necessary to offset the popular cyclical view of the Greeks. Whatever the case, it is interesting that either the Greek cyclical view or the eschatological view of early Christianity has remained at the basis of all attempts through the centuries to determine an approach to history.[17] More important, however, is the fact that Barnabas perpetuated an eschatological view. In so doing he hoped to fire his fellow Christians with a divine optimism over against the world in which they lived. They knew they were in the world but not of it. They knew that they transcended history and yet were enmeshed in it.[18]

Perhaps Ethelbert Stauffer has the best summary of the ideas of history in the times of Barnabas. He says of the Christians in the second century:

> They are gripped by a revolutionary idea of history, filled with an apocalyptic theology of history, in which God and the devil, creation and sin, law and promise, Christ and emperor, primordial time and the end of the world, and last but not least themselves, the men and women of the third race, have their appointed place. They know where they are going. For they know the ways of God through the history of the universe. The New Testament has opened their eyes.[19]

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[17]Cf. Löwith, p. 19: "It seems as if the two great conceptions of antiquity and Christianity, cyclic motion and eschatological direction, have exhausted the basic approaches to the understanding of history. Even the most recent attempts at an interpretation of history are nothing else but variations of these two principles or a mixture of both of them."

[18]Roland H. Bainton, Early and Medieval Christianity (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 4-5.

[19]Ethelbert Stauffer, New Testament Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 48.

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